How much income do you need to afford day care?

Families need to earn $205,000 a year on average to afford care, analysis finds. **In Money**

Director of Diddy series talks risks during filming

Alexandria Stapleton discusses threats and how she got unseen footage for documentary. **In Life**

TOMMY MARTINO/UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA/GETTY IMAGES

'Special' story behind Montana's Tuliaupupu

For linebacker from SoCal, a ninth season of college football represents overcoming a long, painful road. **In Sports**

USA TODAY

THE NATION'S NEWS | $3 | THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2026

Dems see a mixed bag in Florida

Outlier candidate scores another stunning upset

Phillip M. Bailey
USA TODAY

Democrats continued to trade blows in their factional war with a progressive firebrand prevailing in the Florida Senate primary while two centrist House incumbents fended off more left-leaning challengers.

The primary contests stretched across the nation Tuesday, Aug. 18, but most of the action was in the Sunshine State, where state Rep. Angie Nixon, an outspoken member of the Democratic Socialists of America, defeated Alex Vindman, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, in a stunning upset.

"We showed the world what organized people can accomplish," Nixon said in her victory speech.

Florida Rep. Angie Nixon, a firebrand democratic socialist, won her primary race for U.S. Senate by double digits. JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

At the same time, Reps. Jared Moskowitz and Debbie Wasserman Schultz, two well-known Florida Democrats solidly in the establishment camp, won their respective fights to remain on Capitol Hill against progressive opponents.

Both were thrust into freshly gerrymandered districts created by the Florida Legislature at President Donald Trump's behest to give Republicans an advantage in the midterms this fall.

In both races, the two incumbents faced insurgents who ran under the democratic socialist banner with campaigns that emphasized universal health care, cost-of-living concerns and opposition to Israel.

Florida voters also were charged with selecting contenders to succeed Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, a former presidential candidate who is term-limited.

Everything was stacked against Nixon, the 32-year-old state legislator in a race establishment Democrats had hoped to make somewhat competitive this fall.

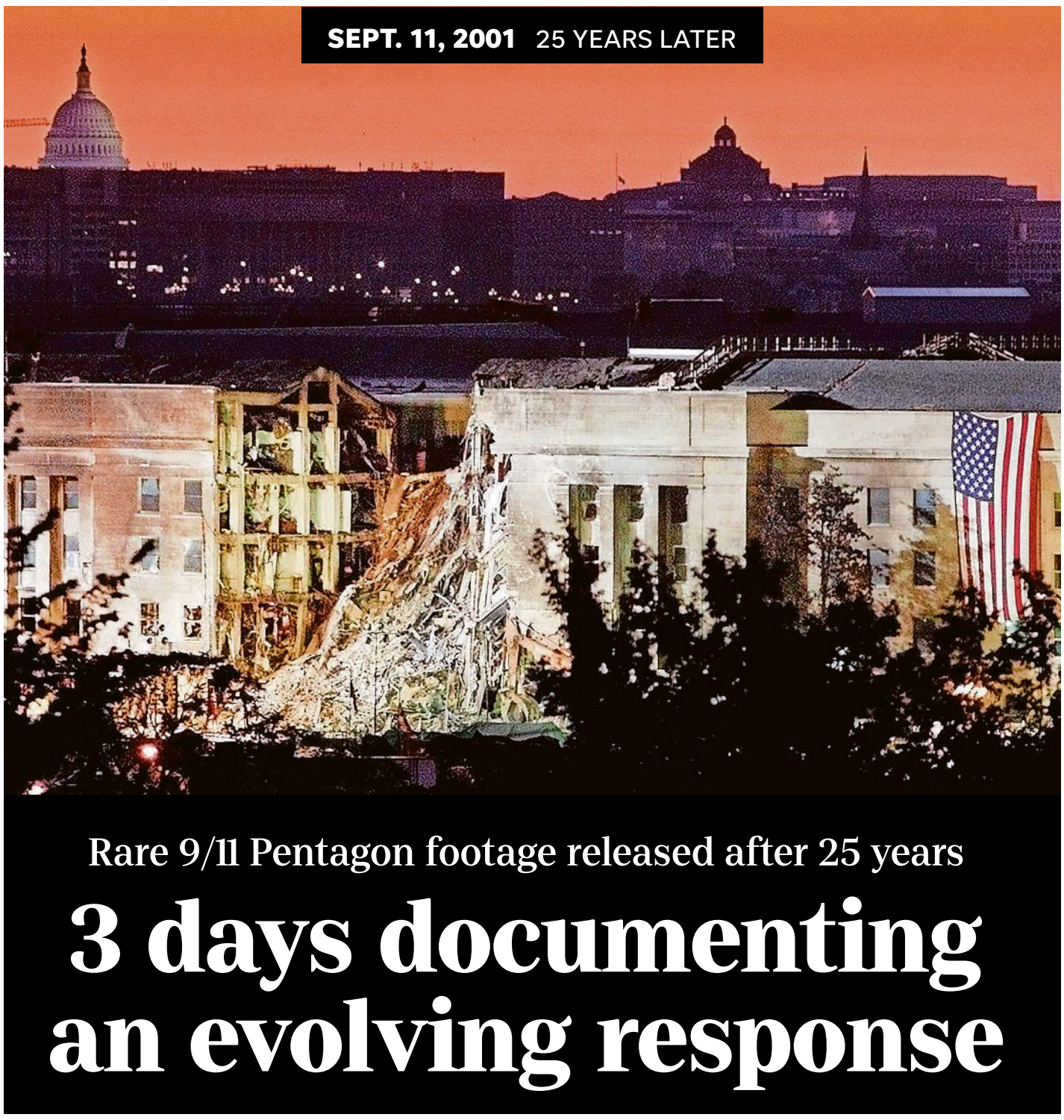
There was little polling in the race, but many had expected a win by Vindman, a former national security official who testified against Trump during his first impeachment trial. He outpaced Nixon in fundraising by a wide margin.

But with about 95% of precincts reporting, Nixon, won the primary by about 11 percentage points in arguably the most surprising win for a DSA candidate this year.

"We did it ya'll ... the fight has just begun," Nixon posted on X Aug. 18.

Nixon ran on a platform that called

See FLORIDA, Page 6A



Rare 9/11 Pentagon footage released after 25 years

3 days documenting an evolving response

Lights illuminate the gash in the Pentagon at sunrise days after a commercial jetliner slammed into it on Sept. 11, 2001. PHOTOS BY LARRY DOWNING/REUTERS

Karissa Waddick USA TODAY

ARLINGTON, VA

The first video captures the eerie, mundane moments of that morning. Through the windshield, viewers see vehicles speeding by, then halting in bumper-to-bumper traffic along Interstate 66. A sign shows they're about 5 miles from the Pentagon. Inside the car, someone says, "you can smell it." ● On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Jude Coke and her two crew members, cameraman Billy DeWeese and firefighter Christopher DeWolf, were creating an emergency responder training video with the Baltimore City Fire Department when they learned of the attack at the Pentagon. They changed their mission and raced to the scene. **See 9/11 FOOTAGE, Page 2A**

A rescue helicopter surveys damage to the Pentagon as firefighters battle flames on Sept. 11, 2001.

"I've carried this with me for over two decades. ... The footage and the human stories inside of it have been within me."
Jude Coke
Documentary filmmaker

9/11 museum coming near Pentagon

Work to start after years of funding, planning delays. **2A**

The Witness Tree in South Carolina's Eutaw Springs Battlefield is estimated to be 300 to 350 years old. PROVIDED BY KRIS MEADE

Racing to save a living relic of the Revolution

Phaedra Trethan USA TODAY

Rick Wise let his imagination wander for a bit, thinking about an oak tree that's about 50 years older than our country.

"If that tree could talk," said Wise, an Army veteran, military historian and executive director with the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust, "the stories it would tell ..."

Situated near a two-story brick house that was a focal point in a Revolutionary War battle, the tree at Eutaw Springs Battlefield in South Carolina has borne witness to history. It was there during the Sept. 8, 1781,

See WITNESS TREE, Page 6A

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2 die after explosions at recycling building

Owner of Toledo site was fined for AL fire

Thao Nguyen
USA TODAY

Two workers were killed after explosions and a large fire tore through an Ohio industrial recycling building early on Aug. 18, prompting a massive emergency response, officials said.

Firefighters were dispatched at around 4:50 a.m. local time after receiving 911 calls reporting an explosion and heavy fire at Brent Industries in Toledo, according to Toledo Fire and Rescue Chief Allison Armstrong. When crews arrived, Armstrong said they encountered heavy flames and smoke.

"Part of the building had already collapsed," the fire chief said at a news conference. "Very challenging conditions for both the employees to evacuate and the fire and rescue department."

Crews found the bodies of two employees, a man and a woman, inside the building hours later, according to Armstrong. Two or three other employees sustained minor injuries and were treated at the scene.

Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz said a shift change was underway at the time of the explosions. The incident prompted an unusually large response because of the size of the structure, hazardous materials on site and reports that workers were trapped inside the building, officials said.

By the afternoon, portions of the building were still burning and smoldering as firefighters worked to contain the fire and prevent it from spreading to nearby businesses and structures. Armstrong said dangerous conditions, including the risk of more explosions and structural collapse, complicated firefighting efforts.

The Toledo Fire and Rescue Department is working to determine the cause of the explosions.

Air monitoring finds no immediate public threat

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said it was notified of the incident through the National Response Center at around 9 a.m. local time and deployed personnel from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to assist with air monitoring and environmental assessments.

"When we arrived shortly after, the fire of the tanks was pretty much extinguished," EPA on-scene coordinator Jon Gulch said at the news conference.

Air monitoring detected no hazardous levels of contaminants, indicating no immediate threat to the surrounding community, according to Gulch.

Company faced citations after fatal Alabama explosion in 2015

Brent Industries, which is based in Brent, Alabama, provides textile reconditioning and industrial recycling services to help companies reduce waste and save money, according to its website. The company was founded in 1977 and operates in Brent and Toledo.

In 2015, one worker was killed and several others were injured after explosions and a fire occurred at the company's Alabama manufacturing plant, reported The Tuscaloosa News, part of the USA TODAY Network.

Investigators with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration found the explosion occurred in an industrial laundering and dry cleaning operation, records show.

The agency subsequently cited Brent Industries for nine serious workplace safety violations involving flammable liquids, hazard communication, exit routes and protective equipment. It issued a fine that was later reduced to $27,300, according to records.

USA TODAY reached out to Brent Industries and OSHA for comment.

Pentagon's 9/11 museum set to break ground after long delays

Slowed by Arlington Cemetery expansion

Karissa Waddick
USA TODAY

A large American flag is unfurled on the side of the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, on Sept. 11, 2025, to commemorate the 24th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks. PROVIDED BY TIA DUFOUR/U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Twenty-five years after 9/11 deeply wounded the nation, construction will soon begin on a museum designed to tell the tragedy's "final chapter."

The project is led by the Pentagon Memorial Fund, a nonprofit created in 2003 by families of victims. In 2008, the group erected an outdoor memorial honoring those who perished in the Pentagon attack. Ever since, it has sought to build an accompanying education facility with information about the victims, the attack and the global war on terror.

Those efforts have been delayed for 18 years by a series of funding and planning challenges. But on Sept. 12, the organization is set to finally break ground on the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial Visitor Education Center.

"It takes time to build buildings within the DC metro area," said Joseph Kornhoff, the group's executive director. "But we are shovel ready."

A long time coming

When it opened in 2008, the Pentagon memorial became the first of its kind. Today, it is the only site attacked on Sept. 11 without a museum or education facility.

The 9/11 Memorial Museum at the World Trade Center site in New York City opened in 2014, three years after twin reflecting pools opened in the footprints of the Twin Towers. The Flight 93 National Memorial Visitor Center and Museum near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, opened in 2015.

The Pentagon's 9/11 education center has taken longer, in part, because of broader plans to expand Arlington National Cemetery nearby.

In 2011, the Pentagon Memorial Fund secured a land grant from Virginia to build the museum. Around the same time, the federal government was negotiating a land exchange with Virginia and Arlington County so it could increase the number of burial sites at the cemetery.

Then, in 2020, the Department of Justice opted to use eminent domain to acquire land and roadways from Arlington to build the cemetery's southern expansion.

Over that time, the land given to the Pentagon Memorial Fund for the education center changed. The project is now included in the broader cemetery expansion plan, which also incorporates the Air Force Memorial.

The expansion isn't expected to be completed until summer 2029. Kornhoff estimates the education center will open sometime that year, too.

Also at issue is funding. The group has so far raised about $13 million of the $100 million estimated cost for the project. That includes $12 million in federal funding and $1 million in state funding from Virginia. It's enough to break ground, but the nonprofit will seek more from public and private sources to build the museum, Kornhoff said.

Private fundraising has significantly risen since the beginning of the year, when the nonprofit received money in a federal defense bill, Kornhoff said.

"That has really allowed the private sector to really jump off," he said.

Vision for the education center

The two-story education center will sit about 200 yards southwest of the existing memorial, across a roadway. A pedestrian pathway will connect the two-story building with the memorial, which lies close to the site where American Airlines Flight 77 struck the Pentagon.

The memorial draws about 1 million visitors each year. Kornhoff said people often view it as the "last stop" of their day when they're visiting the nation's capital. He hopes that the new connectivity to the Air Force Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery will make it more of a destination.

"Tours can be dropped off and go through each of the sites," he said.

The center will feature 10 exhibits, including stories about each of the 184 people killed. Much of the museum will focus on how the terrorist attacks changed the world. Other exhibits will illuminate the national and global responses, as well as what it means for people to "never forget."

For Kornhoff, the 25th anniversary of Sept. 11 marks an especially poignant moment for that mission.

About 30% of the U.S. population today, some 100 million Americans, were not alive on that date. Millions more were too young to understand what was happening.

"What we're trying to do as an organization is educate that one third of Americans that weren't alive and don't have any recollection of that day," he said. "How do we do that? It's through making a personal connection."

Before the anniversary, the Pentagon Memorial Fund is preparing to create a pop-up digital visitor education experience showcasing artifacts it plans to display in the museum, Kornhoff said.

9/11 footage

Continued from Page 1A

Coke, DeWeese and DeWolf embedded with the Arlington County Fire Department and for three days documented the evolving disaster response. They were the only civilian camera crew allowed near the burning building, according to Coke.

Twenty-five years later, some of their rare footage is being released to the American public. Coke partnered with the 9/11 Legacy Foundation, an education-focused nonprofit, to create a six-part documentary covering what they witnessed. The series is the first of its kind.

Since April, they've released the three- to seven-minute videos once a month.

On the timing, Coke said this year's anniversary provided the impetus to get the footage in front of the public.

"This needs to happen. This needs to be preserved," Coke said. "This needs to be shared with the American people and the world."

What's in the footage?

The videos show search crews combing the Pentagon's charred corridors, and interviews with firefighters working to contain the disaster.

In some scenes, responders pick up pieces of American Airlines Flight 77. A police chaplain delivers a poignant prayer. Another clip shows service members recovering a Red Marine Corps flag that stood untouched on the building's fourth floor where the walls had collapsed.

Coke used her team's story to guide people through the events, starting with how they ended up on the scene.

Months earlier, Coke was laid off from a corporate video producing job. Sept. 11 was her first day working with a production company on emergency training films.

When they arrived at the Baltimore fire station, it was clear it wasn't going to be a normal day. All the leaders were huddled around a television, watching news about the first attack at the World Trade Center.

As the tragedy unfolded, Coke's boss urged the team to get as close as they could to the Pentagon.

"I was already nervous about my first day," Coke remembered. "I don't think anything prepared me for that."

Once on scene, the weight of their duty to history pushed them to stay, despite the dangers.

"We were granted an immense responsibility to capture this event in the most responsible way we could," she said. "In the aftermath of that event, we couldn't control what happened to us, but we could control how we responded to it."

An urgent moment

When Coke arrived home to Texas after 9/11, she created an hour-long training video with the footage, then shoved the tapes into a cold, dark corner of her home. There, they collected dust for nearly two decades.

As the 20th anniversary approached, Coke felt a nagging obligation to ensure the scenes she and her teammates risked their lives to film were preserved. A few calls with former colleagues revealed she possessed the only surviving set of the recordings.

She again felt the weight of stewardship.

Short clips from the footage had appeared in a few documentaries. But the raw footage hadn't been digitized or given to historical institutions keeping the memory of 9/11 alive. Cook and her video crew's story also had never been told.

She reached out to officials at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City to ensure they received copyright access to use the entire archive of footage, then was put in contact with Chris Meek, founder of the 9/11 Legacy Foundation.

He asked her to produce a film. Coke knew instantly which stories she wanted to tell.

"I've carried this with me for over two decades. Being there, it changed my life," Coke said. "The footage and the human stories inside of it have been within me."

Though she hopes to eventually make a full-length documentary, Coke said she treated this project as the last way the film will be viewed.

She hopes it will be used to educate the next generation and is working with the Pentagon Memorial Fund to officially house the footage at a planned visitor education center near a memorial honoring the victims.

More than anything, she said, she hopes people see it and understand the fortitude of first responders after 9/11.

"We all have a choice," she said, "to bring that light when darkness hits."

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USA TODAY CO.

Will Amelia Earhart's plane be found?

JANET LOEHRKE AND GEORGE PETRAS/USA TODAY

Though she vanished nearly 90 years ago, aviation legend Amelia Earhart never really left us.

The world remains fascinated – some say haunted – by her life, what she accomplished, and what she dared to try. And now a new search is on for Earhart's Lockheed Electra 10E, which was lost over the Pacific during her attempt to fly around the world.

The effort is the 20th organized search since Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan vanished July 2, 1937.

They were flying east from Lae in Papua New Guinea, trying to reach Howland Island, a tiny speck of land smaller than New York's Central Park, located between Australia and Hawaii.

The newest expedition, conducted by the Archaeological Legacy Institute and Purdue University, will dig up what's known as the Taraia Object, a plane-shaped anomaly buried in ocean sediment in a lagoon of Nikumaroro Island. That's a coral atoll about 350 miles southeast of Howland Island in the Pacific Ocean.

On the day Earhart vanished, the Coast Guard cutter USCGC Itasca was waiting near Howland to refuel the Electra after it landed. The ship received voice messages from Earhart as her signal increased. She said the plane was almost out of fuel.

Robert Ballard and National Geographic findings

First detected in satellite imagery in 2020, the Taraia Object was later found in aerial photographs of the island's lagoon taken as early as 1938, according to Purdue University. Researchers believe the object could be the wreckage of Amelia Earhart's long-lost Lockheed 10E Electra.

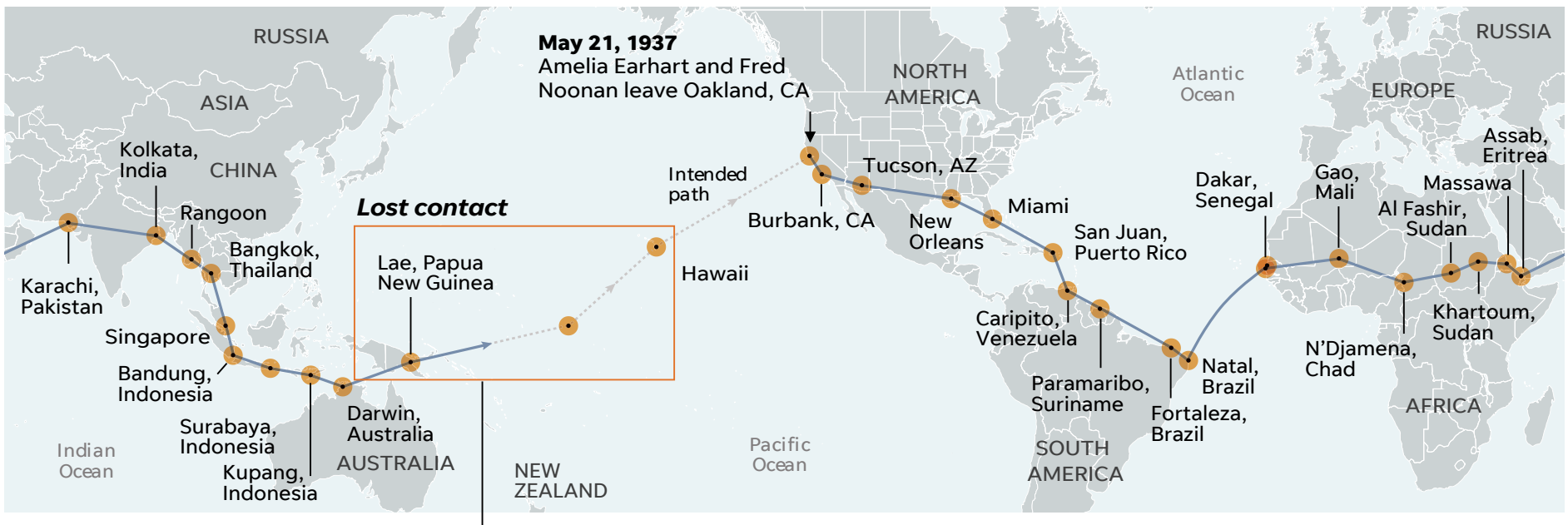
Neither Earhart nor Noonan knew Morse code, so there was no two-way contact, according to the Smithsonian Institution's analysis of government records.

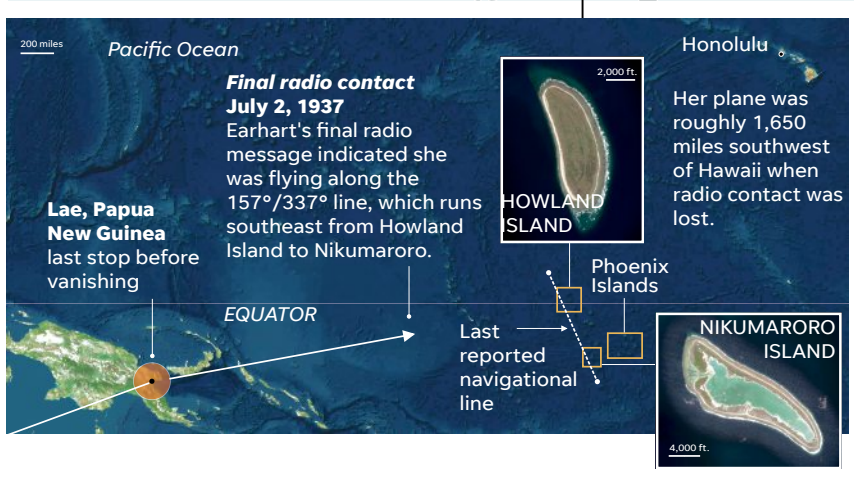
It's commonly believed Earhart ran out of fuel and crashed into the Pacific while searching for Howland Island. The U.S. Navy reached that conclusion after its 16-day search in 1937.

However, sophisticated satellite imagery, reported radio transmissions and other discoveries have led some to theorize Earhart and Noonan landed on Nikumaroro reef. Many people believe the two survived briefly as castaways and the bus-sized plane was swept into the sea.

The Nikumaroro theory is chiefly associated with TIGHAR, The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, which has investigated the idea since 1988.

TIGHAR sent a dozen expeditions to the island between 1989 and 2017. It says "whatever remains of the Electra lies in deep water off the island's west end."




200 miles
Pacific Ocean
Final radio contact
July 2, 1937
Earhart's final radio message indicated she was flying along the 157°/337° line, which runs southeast from Howland Island to Nikumaroro.
Lae, Papua New Guinea
last stop before vanishing
EQUATOR
Last reported navigational line
2,000 ft.
HOWLAND ISLAND
Honolulu
Her plane was roughly 1,650 miles southwest of Hawaii when radio contact was lost.
Phoenix Islands
NIKUMARORO ISLAND
4,000 ft.

What will the new expedition do on Nikumaroro?

The 16-member Taraia Object Expedition will depart in early October. The group will spend several days on Nikumaroro, most of them in the lagoon, where they'll use a hydraulic dredge to carefully remove sediment from what could be the Electra.

The team will be looking to identify the largest sections of the aircraft: the fuselage and wings. If searchers find rivets in aluminum aircraft skin, a comparison of their spacing and geometry will help identification.

If the ALI/Purdue team locates the Electra, it won't go inside it but will return the next year for a full-scale excavation. The team then would plan to remove the aircraft and other remnants, which would be brought back to the United States.

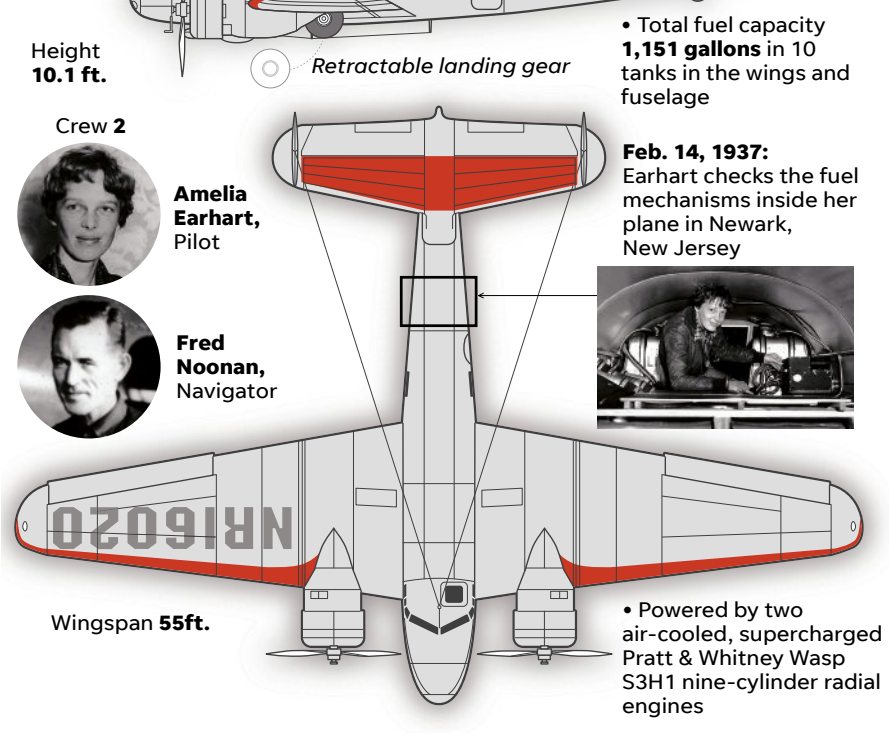
Steve Schultz, senior vice president of Purdue University, said the institution is discussing an agreement with Kiribati, the island nation that maintains control of Nikumaroro, to entrust Purdue with custody of the wreckage, USA TODAY reported.

Earhart's connection to Purdue dates to 1935, the university says. She was a career counselor for women and an adviser to Purdue's Department of Aeronautics. The Amelia Earhart Terminal is part of the Purdue University Airport.

Lockheed Electra 10E

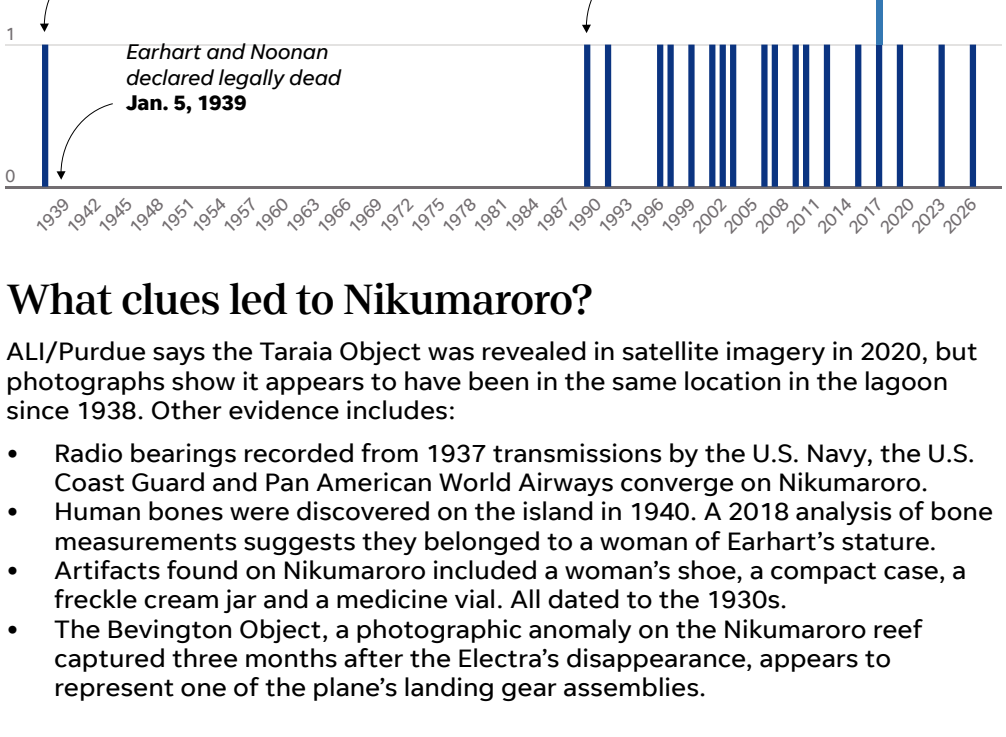
The Electra was equipped with a radio direction finder linked to a manually rotated loop antenna mounted above the cockpit.

To accommodate six extra fuel tanks, Earhart took out the aircraft's seats, leaving the cockpit accessible only by crawling over the tanks.


Size comparison
The aircraft's signature twin-tail arrangement gave the Electra a unique appearance and established a hallmark of Lockheed design.
6-foot man
Aircraft N number NR16020
Length 38.7 ft.
Height 10.1 ft.
Retractable landing gear
• Total fuel capacity 1,151 gallons in 10 tanks in the wings and fuselage
Crew 2
Amelia Earhart, Pilot
Fred Noonan, Navigator
Feb. 14, 1937: Earhart checks the fuel mechanisms inside her plane in Newark, New Jersey
NR16020
Wingspan 55ft.
• Powered by two air-cooled, supercharged Pratt & Whitney Wasp S3H1 nine-cylinder radial engines

How many organized searches have been done?

Teams have searched for Amelia Earhart's plane 19 times since her disappearance in 1937. (Two were done in 2017.) The 2026 expedition will be the 20th.



What clues led to Nikumaroro?

ALI/Purdue says the Taraia Object was revealed in satellite imagery in 2020, but photographs show it appears to have been in the same location in the lagoon since 1938. Other evidence includes:

- Radio bearings recorded from 1937 transmissions by the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard and Pan American World Airways converge on Nikumaroro.
- Human bones were discovered on the island in 1940. A 2018 analysis of bone measurements suggests they belonged to a woman of Earhart's stature.
- Artifacts found on Nikumaroro included a woman's shoe, a compact case, a freckle cream jar and a medicine vial. All dated to the 1930s.
- The Bevington Object, a photographic anomaly on the Nikumaroro reef captured three months after the Electra's disappearance, appears to represent one of the plane's landing gear assemblies.

SOURCE National Air and Space Museum, Lockheed Martin, Google Maps, Reuters, USA TODAY research PHOTOS Getty Images, Library of Congress;
GRAPHIC Janet Loehrke and George Petras/USA TODAY

SpaceX's Starship rocket is recovered intact

Upper stage towed to Christmas Island

Eric Lagatta and Brooke Edwards
USA TODAY

The battle to save a section of SpaceX's giant Starship rocket from the clutches of the Indian Ocean appeared to have been lost.

For days, teams on boats on the other side of the world had tracked down and grabbed the 171-foot-tall section of the rocket that flies in space, known as the upper stage, following a July 24 flight test. But hope of recovering the spacecraft had dwindled so much that even Elon Musk, the tech mogul who founded SpaceX in 2002, took to social media to declare that the odds of success were "not looking good."

Silence followed for more than 10 days after the discouraging Aug. 7 update. Then, on Aug. 18, SpaceX revealed that it had accomplished what it thought rough seas had made impossible: the Starship upper stage had been towed to shore near Australia.

The feat is the latest victory to come of the 407-feet-tall Starship's most recent flight test, which saw the world's largest rocket launch from South Texas and fly halfway around the world before the upper section landed intact in the ocean. Never before had an upper stage survived a flight test, and now SpaceX has nabbed one that it can return to its Texas headquarters to analyze further.

Here's everything to know about SpaceX's saga to recover the upper stage of its Starship rocket following a mission it refers to as "flight 13."

SpaceX's Starship rocket floats at sea off the coast of Christmas Island. The 171-foot-tall upper stage was thought to be lost after a test flight July 24.
PROVIDED BY SPACEX VIA REUTERS

Starship upper stage lands intact after flight 13 from Texas

The section of the Starship rocket that SpaceX recovered was used in a launch that got off the ground July 24 from the company's Starbase headquarters in South Texas near the U.S-Mexico border. The mission was the 13th flight test of Starship since 2023.

While the 236-foot first-stage booster known as Super Heavy made a water landing off the Gulf Coast of Texas after providing the initial burst of thrust at liftoff, the upper stage continued on into suborbital space. Along the way, the vehicle hit a number of SpaceX's objectives for it, including the short-lived deployment of operational Starlink satellites that demised as intended in Earth's atmosphere.

One hour after launch, the upper stage, designated Ship 40, then made a controlled landing following a dangerous reentry into Earth's atmosphere and landed upright in the Indian Ocean. Because the landing was so gentle, Ship 40 was able to slowly tip over and float in the ocean without exploding or sinking, as prior prototypes have done.

SpaceX set out to recover Starship section in Indian Ocean

SpaceX soon dispatched teams on an ambitious mission to locate and haul Ship 40 to shore

But while boats attached a line to Ship 40 and began towing it through the sea, SpaceX said in an Aug. 7 post on social media site X that teams faced "challenging conditions and increasingly rough seas." The dire situation prompted Musk, the chief executive of SpaceX, to admit in a comment that "recovery is not looking good right now."

SpaceX said in an Aug. 7 post on social media site X that teams faced "challenging conditions and increasingly rough seas." And CEO Elon Musk had said "recovery is not looking good."

SpaceX tows Starship to Christmas Island near Australia

Teams, though, apparently did not give up, because SpaceX shared in a post on Aug. 18 that the mission ended in success.

Following what SpaceX said was 24 days at sea, the upper stage was hauled off the coast of Christmas Island, an Australian territory in the Indian Ocean about 840 nautical miles northwest of the mainland.

"Starship Flight 13 is being recovered from sea," Musk said in a post sharing SpaceX's update.

Up next, SpaceX said it plans to return Ship 40 to Starbase in Texas. While prolonged exposure to salt water has likely rendered the vehicle unusable on another flight, SpaceX has expressed interest in studying it to make improvements to future iterations.

Wildlife photographer captures striking images of recovery

Photographer Chris Bray managed to capture overhead photos with a drone of the Starship being hauled to shore that set the internet abuzz.

"There had been rumors it was on its way, and then this morning I heard it was here, so I grabbed my wildlife telephoto lens and drone and dashed down to the coast to see it," Bray wrote to FLORIDA TODAY, part of the USA TODAY Network. "My first reaction as I glimpsed it through the trees was 'OMG that thing is HUGE!'"

Bray, who runs small-group wildlife photo tours around the world, said he had never seen anything like it in his career. Bray said now he's curious to see just how SpaceX goes about recovering this giant milestone spacecraft.

What is SpaceX's Starship megarocket?

SpaceX has been testing Starship since April 2023 on a series of flights from Starbase as it develops the massive rocket for future spaceflight missions, including interplanetary travel.

Musk's vision has long been for Starship to be the vehicle that takes humans to Mars, where they can establish a self-sustaining colony.

While Musk has indicated that SpaceX will focus on building a lunar city first, the company has already announced a human-led expedition to Mars' orbit – though it has not set a target date.

SpaceX also is under contract with NASA to develop a lunar lander configuration of its Starship, known as the Human Landing System, to ferry astronauts to the moon under the U.S. space agency's Artemis program.

Kent eyes a MAGA rebellion over Iran war

Conservatives fuel growing opposition

Zac Anderson
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump led an insurgent takeover of the Republican Party. Now one prominent MAGA dissident believes conservative critics of the Iran war could use the same playbook.

After resigning from the Trump administration over his opposition to the conflict, Joe Kent has been exploring how to channel anti-war sentiment into political action. Trump led the MAGA movement astray with the war, he said. War critics could take a lesson from the president and "hijack" the GOP, he told USA TODAY in an interview.

"We know that we have something here in terms of political energy," Kent said. "We know that people are frustrated."

Former National Counterterrorism Center Director Joe Kent resigned March 17 as a protest against the war on Iran. ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY IMAGES

Kent is at the center of growing MAGA backlash to the war, which has sparked outrage among some on the right who believe the conflict clashes with Trump's campaign pledges to avoid foreign military entanglements. He met with other prominent MAGA war dissenters last month to plot their next steps.

It's unclear how deep the appetite is for a GOP reckoning on Iran. A recent AP-NORC survey found most Republicans still back Trump on the conflict, but that support has slipped. Kent said the war could have lasting political repercussions.

A gathering he attended at the Maine home of conservative media personality Tucker Carlson fueled speculation about a new political movement centered around conservative criticism of the war. The meeting included Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Kentucky, and former Rep. Marjorie Taylor Green, who resigned from her position this year and said she no longer supports the Republican Party.

Massie, Greene and Carlson all have clashed with Trump on Iran**.** Greene posted a photo on social media afterward with the caption "the movement has begun."

Kent shared details of the confab, saying an anti-war political coalition could be a force in future elections and offering different scenarios for the shape it might take, while noting it's still in the early stages.

"We still just have to flesh out what this coalition is all about," he said.

A meeting at the home of conservative media personality Tucker Carlson has boosted speculation about a new anti-war movement. REUTERS

'No military solution'

Kent joined the Trump administration last year as the director of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center.

An Army veteran and close ally of former Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, another military veteran who has embraced MAGA non-interventionism, Kent said he was drawn to the president by his foreign policy platform. He resigned from the administration on March 17, fewer than three weeks into the Iran war.

In his resignation letter, Kent wrote about his 11 combat deployments and losing his wife, who was killed by a suicide bomber while serving with the Navy in Syria. He told Trump he opposed sending "the next generation off to fight and die in a war that serves no benefit to the American people nor justifies the cost of American lives." There have been 18 U.S. service members killed in the war, and concerns about troop morale amid complaints about living conditions on the USS Abraham Lincoln.

Five months after resigning, Kent is continuing to press his case publicly while taking tentative steps to organize politically. He told USA TODAY that the president is too focused on a formal peace deal and should simply walk away.

"There's no military solution," Kent said. "If there was one, then he just would simply execute it."

The White House responded by calling Kent a "quitter."

"President Trump has destroyed nearly all of Iran's military capabilities and is crushing what's left of its abysmal economy with the most powerful naval blockade in world history," White House spokesman Davis Ingle said in a statement. "In quitter Joe Kent's twisted mind, that somehow means Iran is winning."

Trump told reporters after Kent's resignation that "I always thought he was a nice guy. But I always thought he was weak on security, very weak on security."

War shadows midterms

Trump has struggled to end the war. He announced a peace deal in June, but it quickly fell apart amid jockeying over the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for oil shipments. Iran has continued to threaten shipping in the strait. Trump said Aug. 18 that the United States is not engaged in talks with Iran amid an ongoing naval blockade, suggesting a stalemate.

The unpopular war is shadowing the 2026 midterm elections, hurting Trump's approval rating and threatening to drag down his party as it seeks to maintain control of Congress. Just 39% of voters approve of Trump's job performance in the Real Clear Politics average of recent polls. But Kent said the political fallout could extend further, with the war continuing to be a potent issue in the 2028 presidential contest.

Kent and other MAGA war critics are looking ahead and plotting how to influence future elections. Massie, Greene and Carlson also were among the first wave of prominent MAGA figures opposing the war, a group that has been growing as the conflict nears the six-month mark. Kent said the four have been in "regular contact" through phone calls and text messages. Carlson eventually suggested the in-person meeting at his house.

The Maine gathering was "just kind of putting our heads together ... like, what do we think the future is?" Kent said.

The MAGA rebels agree that the GOP establishment has failed. Where they go next remains to be seen. Carlson and Greene have talked about backing a new political party amid their criticism of Trump.

Yet while everyone gathered around Carlson's wooden table liked "the idea of a third party," Kent said, he noted there are significant hurdles to getting a new party on the ballot. He spoke with individuals involved in Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s 2024 independent presidential bid, who talked about the challenges and expense of getting ballot access in all 50 states.

"I don't know how viable the third-party independent lane actually is," Kent said.

Instead, Kent pointed to the "Trump model" in floating the idea of trying to "hijack" the Republican Party. He also suggested that an existing third party, such as the Libertarian Party, could serve as a vehicle to channel a coalition of voters who oppose foreign conflicts and want to focus on domestic needs.

Those scenarios would require unifying behind an anti-war candidate. But nobody at Carlson's house was eager to be that person, Kent said.

"We all kind of did the 'One, two, three, not it,' " he said.

Carlson was a "hard no," Kent said, while Greene ruled out running in an interview with Politico.

After twice losing races for Congress in Washington state against Democrat Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, Kent said, "I've got that out of my system" and won't be a candidate again. Kent's campaigns generated controversy. The Associated Press reported in 2022 on his ties to right-wing extremists, which Democrats pointed to in opposing his nomination to lead the National Counterterrorism Center.

GOP 'reset'

Whoever runs, Kent suggested there could be an effort to "reset" the Republican Party on foreign policy in the 2028 presidential primary. Vice President JD Vance is a likely contender for the party's nomination, but Kent said he could face a "credibility" problem after serving in an administration that launched a new war despite Trump campaigning against foreign entanglements.

"It's going to be hard to go to the 77 million voters who voted for Trump who are probably going to be mad and feel a certain degree of betrayal, and say 'Yeah I was a part of that but trust me it's going to be different this time,' " Kent said. "I just think that's going to be really, really hard."

Vance has been a skeptic of American military intervention abroad, and Trump said his vice president was "less enthusiastic" about launching the Iran war. He has since defended the conflict, though, while working to negotiate its end. He led negotiations on a peace deal that eventually collapsed.

Man hurt in black bear attack at apartment complex in CO

Jeanine Santucci
USA TODAY

A man was injured at a Colorado apartment complex on Aug. 17 when a female black bear attacked him, authorities said.

The man, whose identity was not released, was exiting the laundry room of the apartment building in Eagle-Vail, a small mountain community in the Eagle River Valley in Colorado, when he encountered the bear, Colorado Parks and Wildlife said in a statement on Aug. 18.

The bear swiped at the man, scratching his arm. While trying to escape, he also tripped and injured his foot, the agency said.

The man was taken to a hospital by a family member and treated for his injuries and is now recovering at home, the agency said.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife said its officers have placed a bear trap in the neighborhood. Officials believe the female bear and her cubs have been staying away due to the presence of a larger male bear in the area. There have been multiple reports of a female bear and cubs rummaging in dumpsters, the agency said.

Bear sightings have been on the rise this summer, which wildlife officials attribute to severe drought conditions that are limiting bears' food sources, forcing them to forage in populated areas. Bears are also in their phase of hibernation called hyperphagia as late summer turns to fall, when they become more active as they try to consume up to 20,000 calories per day to prepare for hibernation, the agency said.

Wildlife officials recommend people take the following steps as bears are more active:

- Never feed or approach bears. Feeding bears teaches them to lose their natural fear of humans.
- Lock up trash and other food receptacles to eliminate odor that attracts bears. Most conflicts between humans and bears are traced back to human food, garbage, pet food, bird seed, or other things that attract bears.
- Don't leave pet food outdoors. Feed pets inside or clean up after them thoroughly if they eat outside.
- Clean outdoor grills, burning off food particles and grease, and store them securely in a garage or shed.
- Keep windows and doors locked.
- If you encounter a black bear, don't approach it. If you see it before it notices you, stand still and quietly move away from it. If it sees you, back away slowly. Do not run, as it may trigger the bear to chase you. If the black bear approaches you, hold your ground, wave your arms and yell, "Hey bear," until it leaves. Do not play dead with a black bear; fight back aggressively if it makes contact.
- However, if a grizzly or brown bear attacks, you should play dead, according to the National Park Service. Fighting back will usually worsen an attack from a grizzly or brown bear, but if the attack persists, then fight back with everything you have.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

In re: Simply Interior Homes, LLC, *et al.*,[1] Debtors. — Chapter 11; Case No. 26-10922 (CTG); (Jointly Administered); **Re: Docket No. 336**

NOTICE OF (I) INTERIM APPROVAL OF COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN; AND (II) HEARING TO CONSIDER (A) FINAL APPROVAL OF THE COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN AS CONTAINING ADEQUATE INFORMATION AND (B) CONFIRMATION OF THE COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE OF THE FOLLOWING:

On June 8, 2026 (the "Petition Date"), the above-captioned debtors and debtors in possession (the "Debtors") filed a voluntary petition for relief under chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code. The Debtors are operating their business and managing their property as debtors in possession pursuant to sections 1107(a) and 1108 of the Bankruptcy Code.

THE COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN

On August 12, 2026, the Debtors filed the *Further Amended Combined Disclosure Statement and Chapter 11 Plan of Liquidation of Simply Interior Homes, LLC and Its Debtor Affiliates (Solicitation Version)* [Docket No. 341] (including all exhibits thereto and as amended, supplemented or otherwise modified from time to time, and collectively, the "Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan").[2]

INTERIM APPROVAL OF DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

By order dated August 10, 2026 (the "Solicitation Procedures Order"), the Bankruptcy Court approved, on an interim basis, the disclosures (the "Disclosures") in the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan as containing adequate information within the meaning of section 1125 of Bankruptcy Code. The Solicitation Procedures Order expressly reserves all parties' rights to raise objections to the adequacy of information in the Disclosures and the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan.

Pursuant to the Solicitation Procedures Order, the Bankruptcy Court established **September 11, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)** (the "Voting Deadline") as the deadline by which Ballots accepting or rejecting the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan must be received. If you are the holder of an Allowed Claim in Class 3 (Prepetition Secured Claims), Class 4 (Subordinated Sponsor Secured Note Claims), or Class 5 (General Unsecured Claims) as of the Voting Record Date of August 10, 2026 and are otherwise entitled to vote to accept or reject the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan, your original Ballot must be submitted and **actually be received** on or before the Voting Deadline by the Claims Agent in accordance with the instructions for completing the Ballot as set forth therein.

THE CONFIRMATION HEARING

On **September 18, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. (Eastern Time)**, a hearing will be held before the Honorable Craig T. Goldblatt in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, 824 North Market Street, 3rd Floor, Courtroom 7,[3] Wilmington, DE 19801 to consider final approval of the Disclosures and confirmation of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan, as the same may be amended or modified (the "Confirmation Hearing").

The Confirmation Hearing may be adjourned from time to time. If the Confirmation Hearing is adjourned, the Debtors will file a notice of adjournment on the docket and serve it by email if available, otherwise by first class or overnight mail, on the parties who have requested notice pursuant to Bankruptcy Rule 2002 and Local Rule 2002-1(b) and on any parties that have filed objections to approval of the Disclosures or confirmation of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan. The Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan may be modified in accordance with the Bankruptcy Code, the Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure, and other applicable law, without further notice to creditors or other parties in interest, prior to or as a result of the Confirmation Hearing.

DEADLINE FOR OBJECTIONS TO FINAL APPROVAL OF THE DISCLOSURES OR CONFIRMATION OF THE PLAN

Any objections to final approval of the Disclosures contained in, and/or confirmation of, the Combineded Disclosure Statement and Plan (a "Confirmation Objection") must be filed by **4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on September 11, 2026** (the "Objection Deadline") and must: (a) be in writing; (b) conform to the Bankruptcy Rules and the Local Rules; (c) state the name, address, phone number, and email address of the objecting party and the amount and nature of the Claim or Interest of such entity, if any; (d) state with particularity the legal and factual bases and nature of any objection to the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan, and, if practicable, a proposed modification to the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan that would resolve such objection; and (e) be filed with the Court and served on (i) counsel to the Debtors, (a) Goodwin Procter LLP, 620 Eighth Avenue, New York, New York 10018 (Attn: Kizzy L. Jarashow (kjarashow@goodwinlaw.com) and Barry Z. Bazian (bbazian@goodwinlaw.com)) and (b) Potter Anderson & Corroon LLP, 1313 North Market Street, 6th Floor, Wilmington, Delaware 19801 (Attn: L. Katherine Good (kgood@potteranderson.com) and Brett M. Haywood (bhaywood@potteranderson.com)); (ii) counsel to the DIP Secured Parties: (a) Paul Hastings, LLP 200 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10166 (Attn: Roger Schwartz (rogerschwartz@paulhastings.com), Peter Montoni (petermontoni@paulhastings.com), William Reily (williamreily@paulhastings.com), and Alison Sikes (alisonsikes@paulhastings.com)) and (b) Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor, LLP 1000 North King Street, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Attn: Joseph Barry (jbarry@ycst.com) and Joseph Mulvihill (jmulvihill@ycst.com)); (iii) the Office of the United States Trustee, J. Caleb Boggs Federal Building, 844 King Street, Suite 2207, Lockbox 35, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Attn: Benjamin A. Hackman (benjamin.a.hackman@usdoj.gov); and (iv) counsel to the Committee: Lowenstein Sandler LLP (a) 1251 Avenue of the Americas, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10020 (Attn: Jeffrey L. Cohen (jcohen@lowenstein.com), Gianfranco Finizio (gfinizio@lowenstein.com), and Eric Seltzer (eseltzer@lowenstein.com); and (b) 1000 N. West Street, Suite 1200, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Attn: Shanti M. Katona (skatona@lowenstein.com) and Michael V. DiPietro (mdipietro@lowenstein.com).

UNLESS AN OBJECTION IS TIMELY SERVED AND FILED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS NOTICE, IT MAY NOT BE CONSIDERED BY THE BANKRUPTCY COURT.

EXCULPATION, RELEASES, AND INJUNCTION

A Holder of a Claim or Interest in a Non-Voting Class wishing to opt in to the Third-Party Release set forth in Section 14.1 of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan and provided below must submit an Opt-In Form by September 11, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time). The exculpations, releases, and injunctions provided for in section 14.1 of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan shall be effective upon the Effective Date.

COPIES OF THE COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN

PURSUANT TO THE SOLICITATION PROCEDURES ORDER, YOU MAY NOT HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THE COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN. If you wish to receive copies of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan, they will be provided, as soon as practicable, upon request to Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC (the "Claims Agent") by writing to Simply Interior Homes, LLC c/o Epiq Ballot Processing, 10300 SW Allen Boulevard, Beaverton, OR 97005 or to SimplyInterior@epiqglobal.com and reference "Simply Interior Homes, LLC" in the subject line. Copies of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan are also available for free by visiting the Debtors' case website at (https://dm.epiq11.com/case/simplyinterior). In addition, copies of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan are on file with the Clerk of the Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware and may be reviewed during the regular hours of the Bankruptcy Court or online through the Bankruptcy Court's internet website at http://www.deb.uscourts.gov.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR CLAIM OR INTEREST OR THE VOTING PROCEDURES, OR IF YOU NEED A BALLOT OR ADDITIONAL COPIES OF THE COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN OR OTHER MATERIALS, PLEASE CONTACT THE CLAIMS AGENT AS SET FORTH ABOVE.

YOUR RIGHTS MAY BE AFFECTED UPON APPROVAL AND CONFIRMATION OF THE COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN. YOU ARE URGED TO REVIEW A COPY OF THE COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN WHICH MAY BE OBTAINED BY ONE OF THE METHODS DESCRIBED HEREIN.

POTTER ANDERSON & CORROON LLP, L. Katherine Good (DE No. 5101), Brett M. Haywood (DE No. 6166), James R. Risener III (No. 7334), Halley S. Dannemiller (No. 7562), 1313 North Market Street, 6th Floor, Wilmington, Delaware 19801, Tel: (302) 984-6000, Facsimile: (302) 658-1192, Email: kgood@potteranderson.com, bhaywood@potteranderson.com, jrisener@potteranderson.com, hdannemiller@potteranderson.com -and- **GOODWIN PROCTER LLP,** Kizzy L. Jarashow (admitted *pro hac vice*), Barry Z. Bazian (admitted *pro hac vice*), Stacy Dasaro (admitted *pro hac vice*), Artem Skorostensky (admitted *pro hac vice*), The New York Times Building, 620 Eighth Avenue, New York, New York 10018-1405, Tel: (212) 813-8800, Facsimile: (212) 355-3333, Email: kjarashow@goodwinlaw.com, bbazian@goodwinlaw.com, sdasaro@goodwinlaw.com, askorostensky@goodwinlaw.com, *Counsel for Debtors and Debtors in Possession*

[1] The Debtors in these chapter 11 cases, along with the last four digits of each Debtor's federal tax identification number include: Simply Interior Homes, LLC (8509); Simply Interior Homes AcquisitionCo, LLC (9643); SIH Beckham Buyer, LLC (5210); SIH-HSD Holdings, LLC (5402); SIH-BB Holdings, LLC (2303); SIH-DMD Holdings, LLC (2411); and SIH-SR Holdings, LLC (1835). The location of the Debtors' service address in these chapter 11 cases is 3042 Southcross Boulevard, Suite 102, Rock Hill, SC 29730.

[2] Capitalized terms not defined herein shall have the same meanings ascribed to them in the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan. The statements contained herein are summaries of the provisions contained in the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan and do not purport to be precise or complete statements of all the terms and provisions thereof or documents referred to therein. To the extent there is a discrepancy between the terms herein and the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan, the terms in the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan shall govern and control.

[3] Courtroom subject to change.

More human remains found as Lake Mead recedes

Trevor Hughes
USA TODAY

Authorities are investigating the Aug. 16 discovery of human remains at Lake Mead outside Las Vegas, the latest gruesome discovery there as the nation's largest reservoir continues emptying.

Due to ongoing drought, Lake Mead has now fallen to never-before-seen levels, exposing new shoreline and uncovering hidden debris. Officials have recovered multiple bodies from the shrinking lake, including one found stuffed in a barrel in 2022.

The National Park Service in a statement said there is no indication that the most recent body found on Aug. 16 is suspicious. The park service manages public access to Lake Mead and the surrounding area. The Clark County Coroner's Office said investigators are working to identify the cause and manner of death, along with the identity of the deceased found at Boulder Beach.

"A non-criminal, dead body report was taken for the remains," the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department told USA TODAY in a statement.

In 2022 – when lake levels were a foot higher – boaters discovered a still-unidentified body stuffed inside a barrel in the Hemenway Harbor area of the lake. Investigators said the man inside the barrel appeared to have been shot, possibly sometime in the mid-1970s to early 1980s, based on his clothes and footwear. At the time he was shot, Lake Mead was almost completely full and the water in the area would have been at least 20 to 30 feet deeper.

Authorities that same year recovered the body of a man who reportedly drowned in 2002, another man who drowned in 1974, and the body of a man who died of as-yet-undetermined causes after disappearing in 1998.

Experts say Lake Mead's proximity to Las Vegas – 20 miles from the Strip as the crow flies – makes it highly likely that there are more bodies to be discovered in the lake, especially given the reputation of Sin City as a home for the mob. Authorities also have recovered firearms and sunken boats from the reservoir.

Lake Mead also is the final resting place of a surplus WWII B-29 that crashed in 1948. The lake's receding waters also are uncovering ghost towns flooded when the Hoover Dam was built, along with prehistoric salt mines.

The lake began filling in 1935.

Witness Tree

Continued from Page 1A

fight that was one of the war's final battles in the Palmetto State, a battle that set the stage for British Gen. Charles Cornwallis' eventual surrender at Yorktown, Virginia, later that year. Despite claiming a tactical victory, the British suffered heavy losses from the American forces led by Gen. Nathanael Greene and were effectively driven from the interior of the Carolinas.

But age, the elements and a lightning strike 50 years ago have taken their toll on what's now called the Witness Tree. In an ill-advised, if well-intentioned, long-ago effort to save the tree after the lightning strike, iron chains and steel support cables were wrapped around its trunk. But the tree kept growing, eventually swallowing the metal into its vascular system and, said arborist Aron Landsaw of SavATree, choking off its ability to fully absorb vital nutrients.

Now SavATree is working to ensure the 300-year-old Witness Tree can survive at least another century, embarking on an effort to remove the old chains and supports, aerate the soil surrounding the tree and make sure it's able to recover fully from any damage already inflicted and prevent any further harm.

An arboreal job unlike any other

Landsaw, an Illinois native who's been an arborist for 15 years, said perhaps the most dangerous part of the job is removing the old cables, which requires workers to climb into the tree's canopy, which stretches more than 40 feet high and 50 yards across, while avoiding a scenario where the cables snap back at the workers.

The cables, well-intentioned at the time, are now "slowly killing it," he said.

A worker near the canopy of the Witness Tree at Eutaw Springs Battlefield tries to remove some of the wires and chains once used to shore up the massive oak.

Chains and wires once used to help save the Eutaw Springs Witness Tree have over the decades begun to choke off its ability to absorb nutrients.
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KRIS MEADE

They've installed a lightning protection system so that, if the tree is struck again, the current will run down into the soil around the tree and dissipate out.

The soil at the tree's base was compacted, so workers also used what Landsaw described as a "supersonic air tool" to disperse the soil without harming the tree's roots. That, he explained, will help the tree better retain moisture and avoid runoff, and allow the roots to better absorb nutrients.

"It's a delicate, surgical process," he explained. "We've done a few trees of this size and age, but nothing that I know of with this sort of significance. This tree stood witness to a battle in the war that secured our freedom."

There are similar oaks in the region that are estimated to be as old as 600 years, he said. "We think we can get at least another couple hundred years" of life for the Witness Tree.

"It's been a fun adventure for me, and a history lesson."

A witness to Revolutionary history

Doug Bostick, Wise's predecessor at the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust, first recognized the need to protect the site of the Battle of Eutaw Springs, Wise explained. As the trust acquired parcels around the site, Bostick noticed "a really, really old tree" on a parcel the trust took control of in 2023.

Bostick died later that year, however, and the trust's volunteers realized the tree was in distress.

Working with the American Battlefield Trust, a nationwide nonprofit, the South Carolina group took down trees in imminent danger but when they came to the old oak, no one really knew how old it was or whether it had any significance. An assessment found some lightning and other damage, and measurements pinned its age at around 300 to 350 years.

"My thought was, this was sitting in the British camp," Wise said. "We actually wondered how it survived [the battle] because they had cut down other trees for heat. We think maybe they kept it for the shade.

"But the bottom line is, it was there. It witnessed all that happened."

Wise, an Iraq War vet who holds a master's degree in military history and was awarded a Bronze Star, said he's glad the Witness Tree can be preserved.

"We can look at this tree and know it was actually part of this battle," he said. "Folks always go to museums and they see artifacts: muskets and bayonets and uniforms and things, and they can tell the stories of a battle. But here is this living thing, sitting right there within sight of where the action took place.

"It really touches a place in my patriotic heart, and I hope it does the same thing for everyone else who sees it."

Florida

Continued from Page 1A

for universal health care and a $25 an hour minimum wage. She gained a bit of notoriety after staging a sit-in at DeSantis' office earlier this year in protest against Florida's redrawn congressional map. That incident is set for trial in September after she was charged with trespassing and resisting an officer without violence.

Nixon is the first Black woman to win a major party nomination for Senate in Florida and will now face Republican Sen. Ashley Moody in a race forecasters rate as solidly in the GOP column. But progressives and Democratic Socialists of America activists are likely to spotlight this win as another example of their grassroots strength.

Jared Moskowitz beats back 'anti-Zionist' opponent

Centrists looking to keep democratic socialists at bay scored a high-profile win in Florida's 23rd Congressional District, a newly drawn area that forecasters rate as the only toss-up House race in the state.

Moskowitz, a fierce defender of Israel, coasted to victory over Oliver Larkin, who went viral for many of his confrontations with conservative commentators over his views on cable TV leading up to the election.

Initial results showed the two-term incumbent winning by almost 30 percentage points in a district that is 25% Jewish with a high concentration of Holocaust survivors.

Much of the race centered on the U.S.

Moskowitz

relationship with Israel, which has defined several Democratic primaries this year.

Larkin ran as a sharp critic of the foreign ally, calling its war in Gaza a genocide and casting himself as the "anti-Zionist" option in the race. Moskowitz, who is Jewish, declined to debate his opponent, accusing him of "running against me solely on my religion," which Larkin denied.

Debbie Wasserman Schultz wins in historically Black district

Wasserman Schultz, a former chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, raised eyebrows when she jumped into the race for Florida's 20th Congressional District, another newly created seat.

Wasserman Schultz

That's because the district is made up of a plurality-Black area at a time when Black Democrats are concerned about eroding diversity initiatives and representation on Capitol Hill.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court limited parts of the 1965 Voting Rights Act in a ruling cheered by conservatives as a symbol of a colorblind society but that civil rights leaders and other liberal opponents say could ultimately reduce the number of Black and Hispanic members of Congress.

Wasserman Schultz, who is White, argued that her years of experience would benefit South Florida constituents, but she was sharply criticized by fellow Democrats for entering the race against four Black candidates: Dale V.C. Holness, a former Broward County mayor; Elijah Manley, a teacher and democratic socialist; former Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, who resigned amid a fraud scandal; and Luther Campbell, founder of hip-hop group 2 Live Crew.

Wasserman Schultz received a plurality of the vote, defeating Holness, her closest rival, by about 25 percentage points.

Byron Donalds, David Jolly will face off for Florida governor

Rep. Byron Donalds joined the growing rank of Black candidates running for governor after winning Florida's Republican gubernatorial nomination.

Donalds

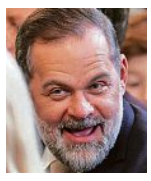
Donalds, 47, received the key Trump endorsement and raised more than $100 million for his campaign in a campaign that featured incendiary attacks by Republican primary rival James Fishback, a conservative activist who lobbed anti-Black remarks against the congressman throughout the election.

Donalds, a rising Republican star in the House, now faces former Rep. David Jolly, a Republican-turned-Democrat and noted Trump opponent, who glided through his nomination by a 55-point margin. He hopes to stitch together a coalition of Democrats, independents and disaffected Republicans in a contest that will favor the GOP in a state the president carried by 13 percentage points in 2024.

Donalds is just the second Black candidate nominated for Florida governor, following former Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum, a Democrat, who made history as the first Black major-party nominee in 2018.

Embattled Trump ally Cory Mills loses GOP primary

The president's touch wasn't enough to get Rep. Cory Mills over the hump after troubling misconduct allegations against him saw many fellow Republicans turn against him before the Aug. 18 primary.



Mills

Mills was the subject of a House ethics inquiry over accusations of "sexual misconduct and/or dating violence" stemming from a Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Department response to a report that he had assaulted a woman with whom he was in a relationship.

The congressman has faced calls from within his own party to resign over the allegations, which he has vehemently denied and which the president overlooked when supporting him for reelection.

By a decisive 13-point margin, however, Republican voters chose Ryan Elijah, a former Orlando-based news anchor, who was backed by Reps. Mike Haridopolos and Anna Paulina Luna. The outcome marks another rare loss for Trump in picking winners in Republican primaries this year.

Elijah beat out Mills along with three other Republicans to face Democrat Bale Dalton, a former Navy captain and NASA chief of staff, in the fall.

Contributing: Terry Collins and Emily R. Condon

OPINION

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We're on Facebook (USA TODAY Opinion) and Instagram and X (@usatodayopinion).
You can also comment directly on online columns.

No, AOC, 'Woke 1.0' was more than just 'crazy'

Dace Potas
USA TODAY

Now that progressives are seizing power within the Democratic Party, one of their main hurdles is explaining away "Woke 1.0," the pandemic-era of American politics in which progressives adopted a slew of ridiculous positions.

When asked about her own past ridiculous positions, as well as those of democratic socialist Wisconsin gubernatorial candidate Francesca Hong, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-New York, explained it as if it were nothing more than a bad fashion choice.

"I have a local city councilman that has this saying, 'Woke 1 was crazy,' " Ocasio-Cortez said. "And I think that what's important is that we have to assess what a candidate is saying now."

Ocasio-Cortez, Hong and other progressives have struggled to distance themselves from the positions they took during the COVID-19 era, and for good reason: They were the enforcers of Woke 1.0 and the cancel culture that came with it. If progressives want Americans to believe they've changed, laughing it off won't cut it. They need to explain why the pandemic-era of progressive politics went too far – and why voters can trust them not to go down that road again.

Ocasio-Cortez got the phrase from Chi Ossé, a New York City councilman who used "Woke 1 was crazyyyy" to rationalize his own past racist statement: "A cis white man should not be the next speaker of the Council."

Hong, a Wisconsin lawmaker who recently lost the Democratic primary in the governor race, has tried a similar whitewash. "I had some hot takes, some bad takes on Twitter," she told Politico. "But I've evolved, I've learned."

Those social media "hot takes" included wanting to "cancel Thanksgiving" and claiming that police "exist to uphold white supremacy."

I'm glad AOC and others are now at least willing to admit that the COVID-19 lunacy went too far. But Woke 1.0 wasn't an oopsie. To anyone paying attention, woke was a lot more than "a derogatory euphemism for civil rights & justice," as AOC put it back in 2021, when she wanted those positions taken seriously.

Among the excesses of Woke 1.0 was a movement aimed at defunding or abolishing the police, gender reassignment surgery for minors, the insistence that men can menstruate, justification of rioting, racial discrimination in hiring and much, much more.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-New York, at Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on July 22. ERIC LEE/REUTERS

'We were shut down'

Not every progressive held each of these positions, but as a collective, they were fine letting them enter the political mainstream. By her own admission, AOC described Woke 1.0 as an attempt to shift the Overton window, the range of ideas considered acceptable in mainstream political debate.

"During this time, especially during COVID, there was a huge opening of the Overton window," Ocasio-Cortez said. "We were shut down. There was some of the highest unemployment rates that we have seen because of those shutdowns, and I think that the doors were really open in trying to entertain any and every policy that was going to get us to a better place, and I actually think that the discussions that were had ... were quite fruitful."

But it was more than that. Progressives pushed corporate America into diversity, equity and inclusion mandates that indoctrinated employees and built a cancel culture that met dissent with job losses and charges of bigotry.

Even progressives who didn't believe the most extreme positions were incentivized to promote them, since it made their own positions sound reasonable by comparison. Instead of "abolish the police," mainstream Democrats arrived at "defund." Instead of "abolish borders," many arrived at "abolish ICE."

It's not enough to wave away that lunacy as if you were swept up in a bad trend – it's an indictment of your judgment and character to have advocated for it. Either you actually believed these positions, making you unfit for office, or you took them up for political convenience, which is just as disqualifying.

America's pullback from this orthodoxy has been rapid. Voters didn't hand Donald Trump a second presidential term for one reason alone, but the backlash against the woke era was a significant one:

- Support for Black Lives Matter, after spiking in 2020, is now more polarized than it was even before the movement's peak.
- Defunding the police was never popular – just 18% backed it in 2021, even as progressives like AOC championed it.
- Fewer Americans now support biological men in women's sports, or gender transitions for minors.
- Corporate America has shifted, too. Just a quarter of S&P 500 companies in 2025 weighed gender or race when adding directors, down from nearly half in 2024. Courts have rejected Nasdaq's push for racial board targets, and Goldman Sachs dropped its diversity requirements for companies that it takes public. Corporations are no longer bowing to the political pressure that forced these superficial requirements in the first place.

Progressives now want to distance themselves from positions that repel the median voter. But in doing so, they shirk responsibility. This wing of the Democratic Party wasn't tricked into these positions; they enforced them, pushing Americans to fall in line or be branded bigots.

People lost jobs for disagreeing with the fashionable take of the day, or for old tweets in poor taste. That's the kind of enforcement that let the movement spiral, unopposed and unapologetic.

The left owes us an explanation

Failing to explain what they believed then, what they believe now and why they changed is going to haunt progressives with higher aspirations.

The Democratic Socialists of America party still calls for "fully abolishing the police and prison system," a position many on the left once held and are now trying to walk back.

As it stands, the reversal looks too convenient. The only thing that's changed since 2020 is that voters rejected these positions – and progressives want to look palatable again.

The existence of "Woke 1" implies that a "Woke 2" is already in the works. From what I can tell, it isn't all that different in substance, just strategy and rhetoric. Progressive candidates will keep being haunted by Woke 1.0 for as long as they run for office, unless they explain – explicitly – why this time is different. Otherwise, voters will see right through it.

Dace Potas, a law student, is an opinion columnist for USA TODAY. Follow him on X: @DacePotas

'Woke 1.0' was tasked with putting Band-Aids over bullet holes

Kofi Mframa
USA TODAY

"Woke" used to mean something.

Like many facets of American culture, "woke" was derived from African American Vernacular English, meaning to "alert to racial prejudice and discrimination." The term has been central to Black political consciousness from its adoption in the 1930s, to its use in both iterations of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2014 and 2020, to its appropriation by non-Black people to discuss matters of gender and queerness, to its addition to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2017.

Since 2020, woke has taken on a new meaning entirely divorced from its original context, serving more as a dual-sided straw man. Breathless Republicans have turned woke into a pejorative for anyone and anything they don't like. And the progressives they cudgel with the term don't even ascribe to it. On the left, woke is used almost ironically to gesture toward more progressive politics or poke fun at right-wingers who misappropriate it.

The tedious retracing of "Woke 1.0" history seems less like a much-needed course correction and more like an attempt to woo all those undecided voters who definitely exist and capitulate to Republicans who were bound to grind their anti-progressive axes regardless.

The lack of specificity in defining the woes of woke suggests that its perceived failure isn't a result of the ideologies it propagated, but a reflection of a culture where paradigms and mores are ever-changing.

Sure, whatever these people are calling Woke 1.0 could've been more focused, but we can't say all its wounds were self-inflicted.

As democratic socialists win elections across the country, there's been a concerted effort from progressive politicians to distance themselves from past interpretations of woke. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-New York, agreed with her local city councilman that "Woke 1 was crazy."

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Protesters rally on Aug. 28 in New York City, urging corporate America to resist the Trump administration's campaign to roll back diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. The march comes on the anniversary of the March on Washington in 1963. MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO/GETTY IMAGES

A clumsy political awakening

To me, Woke 1.0 represents an era of political awakening between the mid-2010s into the early 2020s where complex discussions of race, gender, sexuality, class and disability entered the Overton window. Academic ideas like patriarchy, systemic racism, intersectionality, queer theory and the like found their way into the progressive lexicon, especially online.

The most salient criticism of Woke 1.0 can be found in the clumsy application of those ideas. Although it's admirable that so many sought after a more robust understanding of the world around them, we didn't have the political acumen or imagination to effectively apply these ideas and create our progressive utopia.

Instead, we opted for virtue signaling. Land acknowledgements at movie theaters and on university websites recognized the genocide of Native Americans but did little to improve the material conditions of Indigenous communities. "Internet activists" spread awareness about racism and other political topics through infographics that seldom materialized into actionable change.

Woke 1.0 reached its peak in 2020 after the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. The culture of isolation and chronic internet use brought on by COVID-19 made this moment inescapable.

For the first time, institutions were incentivized – or forced, rather – to acknowledge America's sordid racial history. It was a flash-in-the-pan moment when those in power were actually held accountable for past missteps.

This is where many Woke 1.0 dissenters express their grievances with the era. Many thought the "cancel culture" that woke propagated was too punitive and unspecific. But let the right tell it, and woke supporters were hosting public executions for anyone who strayed from liberal dogma.

I'm sure some wrongful cancellations happened, but most were rightfully reprimanded for bad things they said.

Actions have consequences.

Trump now rules cancel culture

The reelection of President Donald Trump in 2024 effectively ended Woke 1.0 and the momentum toward a culture it wanted to shape. Now that Republicans have regained power, they've employed woke-esque cancel culture tactics against anything they dislike – be it books, Bud Light, NPR, PBS, drag shows, transgender people or diversity, equity and inclusion.

But if the alleged slash-and-burn tactics of Woke 1.0 were such a failure, why have Republicans been able to use them with such success?

It's clear those tactics weren't the sole cause of Woke 1.0's demise. Its calls for radical ideas like police and prison abolition were more idealistic than realistic, and the way these ideas were packaged online haphazardly posited them as easy solutions instead of long-term efforts to reimagine ossified institutions. Why would the powers that be want to take part in their own collapse?

Many proposals that came as a result of Woke 1.0 were doomed for this very reason. DEI efforts were tasked with putting Band-Aids over bullet holes with little institutional support. They were set up to fail.

The right has effectively morphed "woke" into a cartoon boogeyman. Progressives should let them wear themselves out, and keep moving along with all the same ideological fire that made the right melt down in the first place.

With Woke 2.0 on the horizon, now is the time to take hold of many Americans' dissatisfaction with the state of things in our country. Hopefully, with a bit more practicality.

Kofi Mframa is a columnist and digital producer for USA TODAY.

USA TODAY

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We survey and compile the top news stories from all 50 states plus Washington, DC. **Page 3B**

Blowing through budgets

The income you need to afford day care in your state

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

For many U.S. families, paying for childcare can take a significant bite out of the household budget. A new ConsumerAffairs analysis found families nationwide would need to earn about $205,000 a year for full-time, center-based toddler care to meet a federal affordability benchmark.

That figure is more than twice the 2024 median family income of $99,999. Nationwide, average toddler care costs account for 14.3% of median family income, more than double the 7% affordability benchmark previously established by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

High childcare costs can affect more than household budgets. Experts told ConsumerAffairs that families may respond by cutting other expenses, having fewer children, or leaving the workforce.

"The system may appear more functional than it is because families are absorbing much of the instability themselves," Brittany Walsh, senior associate director at the Bipartisan Policy Center, told ConsumerAffairs.

Where day care is most expensive

Massachusetts tops the list, with families needing an estimated $349,543 in annual household income for toddler care to meet the 7% benchmark. Full-time care costs an average of $24,468 a year, or $2,039 a month.

Vermont ranks second at $294,586 in required income, followed by Oregon at $293,814, Washington at $293,486 and Hawaii at $283,314.

See BUDGETS, Page 2B

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

Experts: Economic fix can help SSI

Policies that strengthen wages, workers can help

Medora Lee
USA TODAY

It's the economy, stupid.

Political strategist James Carville coined that phrase during Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential run against George H.W. Bush to remind Democrats to focus on pocketbook issues, but some analysts said that logic can also be applied to keep Social Security afloat.

The trust fund that supplements incoming payroll taxes to pay monthly Social Security benefits is expected to run dry by the end of 2032, according to the program's trustees.

When that happens, the law requires benefits to be reduced by an estimated 22% to ensure the program's costs do not exceed its revenues.

While Congress has yet to raise taxes, cut benefits, or do both to keep affording payouts as population growth slows, some economists say the strongest Social Security reforms may not look like Social Security policy at all. Instead, they say, Congress should shift its focus to managing the economy better to encourage more Americans to work and earn.

"Social Security is a reflection of, and is supported by, the strength of the economy," said economist and Social Security expert Kathryn Anne Edwards at center-left think tank Roosevelt Institute.

"Who is working, how much they earn, how healthy they are, and how much they save matter more than the head count. People could live longer, have fewer kids, and have a solvent Social Security if workers earned enough money."

Why is Social Security facing cuts and what are current ideas to boost it?

Social Security is financed through a dedicated payroll tax. Employers and employees each pay 6.2% of wages up to $184,500 in 2026, while the self-employed pay 12.4%.

Now that the large Baby Boomer generation is retiring and collecting Social Security, and population growth has slowed, there aren't enough workers and payroll taxes to fully fund the benefits. That has resulted in the program dipping into its trust fund to make up for the shortfall and running down the balance.

Many politicians, including Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, and Sen. Bernie Moreno, R-Ohio, support raising or eliminating the wage cap for the payroll tax to extend Social Security's solvency. Others have suggested raising the full retirement age from 67 years, increasing the payroll tax rate, or capping the annual cost-of-living adjustment.

See ECONOMY, Page 2B

Treasury gives Trump-owned crypto firm a bank charter

Erin Mansfield
USA TODAY

The cryptocurrency company that made President Donald Trump nearly $800 million since he returned to the White House has received the green light to become a bank and potentially make him even more money.

World Liberty Trust Co. received conditional approval from the Treasury Department on Aug. 14 to become a bank. The approval specifically gives World Liberty the right to issue a type of cryptocurrency called stablecoin, which is tied to the U.S. dollar.

"Our ambition is clear: to build the most trusted and widely used digital dollar in the world while strengthening the role of the U.S. dollar across the global economy," Zach Witkoff, chief executive officer of World Liberty Financial, wrote in a social media statement.

Trump and his sons cofounded World Liberty Financial, and the company brought in nearly $800 million for Trump in 2025, according to his financial disclosure.

The Trump organization advertises the company on its website.

Additionally, Zach Witkoff is the son of diplomat Steve Witkoff, a key foreign policy figure in the Trump administration.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Democrat from Massachusetts, called the charter approval "the most brazen act of self-dealing our financial system has ever seen" and said she would introduce a bill "to stop this kind of unprecedented corruption."

Anna Kelly, a spokesperson for the White House, said in a statement: "All of President Trump's investment holdings are held in fully discretionary accounts managed by independent third-party financial institutions. This is the same, tired narrative that Democrats have pushed against President Trump, his family, and his administration for a decade."

Trump is a champion of crypto

Many of Trump's policies since taking office have benefited the crypto industry, including implementing federal rules for stablecoins, which is what World Liberty Financial will now be able to issue, and dialing back how much the Justice Department and Securities and Exchange Commission police the industry.

"A charter makes it easier for you to support customers and provide new services," said Christian Catalini, founder of the MIT Cryptoeconomics Lab. He said World Liberty Financial represents part of a backlog of crypto companies seeking to operate as banks and now getting approved under the Trump administration.

Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump gesture outside the Nasdaq building after ringing the opening bell to celebrate the closing of ALT5's $1.5 billion offering. EDUARDO MUNOZ/REUTERS

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who was appointed by Trump, wrote on social media Aug. 17 that his department is working "to provide the regulatory certainty businesses need to innovate

See CHARTER, Page 2B

Corporate boards are taking a page from Elon Musk

Ross Kerber
REUTERS

Extraordinary corporate compensation deals for Elon Musk have opened the door for the CEOs of other S&P 500 companies to win huge paydays, a new study shows.

Even excluding the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, average compensation for chief executives in the S&P 500 soared 21% to $22.8 million in 2025, according to data to be released later on Aug. 20 by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. That is the highest amount since the top U.S. labor federation began tracking the figure in the 1990s.

Driving the gains was an increasing number of mega-pay plans inspired by Musk's compensation deal at Tesla worth as much as $1 trillion if he hits all possible targets, labor officials said. Shareholders of the electric vehicle maker last November approved a restricted stock plan that the company valued at $158 billion.

Including that figure, average S&P 500 CEO pay reached $340.1 million last year, according to this year's edition of the AFL-CIO's widely followed Paywatch study.

Musk also became the world's first trillionaire, based on his stake in satellite and artificial intelligence company SpaceX.

Musk's pay "changes the dynamic when other CEO compensation plans come up, boards use it as a reference," Fred Redmond, the AFL-CIO's secretary-treasurer, said in a telephone interview.

Widening pay gap fuels union anger

Meanwhile, said Redmond, wages of employees are being held back by the rise of AI and a National Labor Relations Board run by Republicans, whom labor leaders view as hostile to union organizing efforts.

Both factors helped drive the average ratio of CEO-to-worker pay to 312:1 at S&P 500 companies last year, up from 285:1 in 2024, excluding Musk's Tesla compensation. When Musk's Tesla compensation is included, last year's average pay ratio between CEOs and workers reached 5,387 to 1.

"As we talk to our members, they're pissed off over what's happening to them, and they feel as though they should be more vocal in terms of calling attention to inequality," Redmond said. He noted union representation has hit the highest level in 16 years.

Rising CEO pay and inequality connect to broader political debates on why U.S. workers have trouble affording housing, health care and other necessities. Mean annual wages for all U.S. workers were $69,770 as of May 2025, up 3% from a year earlier, according to U.S. Labor Department statistics.

Boardroom compensation committees often argue their pay plans are linked to shareholder value and incentivize executives to deliver. They note investors, including the largest asset managers, usually back the pay plans at corporate annual meetings.

Average support for those advisory "say on pay" votes at S&P 500 companies stood at 90.6% through late June, according to compensation consulting firm Semler Brossy, up from 89.4% for all of 2025.

Elon Musk, founder, CEO, chairman and chief engineer of SpaceX, speaks via videolink on the day of SpaceX's initial public offering at the Nasdaq MarketSite in New York City on June 12. BRENDAN MCDERMID/REUTERS

Hot-button votes

The trend does not always apply to the proliferation of special pay awards, however, Semler Brossy found. "These awards, which are usually intended to be one-offs and exist outside of annual compensation programs, are a hot-button issue," the firm found.

Among S&P 500 companies disclosing special pay awards, Wall Street bank Goldman Sachs paid David Solomon $118.9 million last year, including a major retention award. In an advisory vote, 71% of shares cast backed the pay, below the average. Asked to comment, Goldman Sachs spokesman Tony Fratto said, "We're very pleased with the strong supermajority this vote received."

Also, real estate investment trust Welltower paid CEO Shankh Mitra $821 million, meant to include most of his pay over the coming decade. Only 19% of shares cast supported the pay.

"Welltower's board and compensation committee remain committed to engaging with shareholders to gather their feedback and understand their perspectives," a spokesperson said.

Budgets

Continued from Page 1B

Oregon has the highest childcare costs relative to the state's median family income.

Average toddler care consumes 20.1% of median family income in the state.

That means a typical household would need to nearly triple its income for care to reach the 7% threshold.

Where day care is least expensive

Mississippi has the lowest estimated income needed to afford toddler care, at $92,743. But that is still nearly $20,000 higher than the state's median family income of $73,163.

West Virginia ranks second-lowest at $121,986, followed by Alabama at $123,514, South Dakota at $126,557 and Arkansas at $127,614.

Mississippi also has the lowest average annual toddler care cost in the analysis, at $6,492. Even so, that represents 8.9% of median family income, showing that lower child care prices do not necessarily make care affordable for typical households.

Childcare can also cost more than other major household expenses. ConsumerAffairs found annual toddler care costs more than average in-state tuition at a four-year public college in 37 states.

Nationally, toddler care costs about 35% more than average in-state public college tuition. Childcare costs are lower than median mortgage and rent payments in most states.

The analysis used 2025 state averages for full-time, center-based toddler care from Child Care Aware of America. ConsumerAffairs calculated the income needed for care to represent 7% of household income by dividing each state's annual childcare cost by 0.07.

New Mexico was excluded because it began offering universal no-cost child care to residents in late 2025. Colorado and South Carolina did not report 2025 childcare costs, so their figures were estimated using the national year-over-year change in childcare costs.

Economy

Continued from Page 1B

Why aren't those ideas good enough?

People see Social Security as "the inexorable result of demographics," Edwards said. "This view stems from understanding Social Security as basically a pyramid scheme. Workers pay in, retirees get out, so the ratio between them underpins the program's stability. People live longer and have fewer kids, ergo, Social Security is running out of money. That's a one-dimensional view of a multidimensional problem."

Instead, Social Security depends more on the underlying strength of the economy and how well it is managed, analysts said. Polices that strengthen the economy, encourage more people to work and enable people to earn higher wages are better options to boost Social Security, they said.

What kind of policies could help?

Policies that strengthen the labor economy and increase wages and the number of workers would automatically translate into more money for Social Security, Edwards said. Some examples of policies that she said could help include:

- **Basic changes in labor regulations**, such as paid sick days, paid family and medical leave, and the right to work part time, as well as infrastructure investments including universal free childcare, have been shown to increase the labor force participation of parents, particularly mothers.
- **Raising wages** through such policies as a higher minimum wage and stronger collective bargaining would strengthen the program's finances – not just workers' paychecks. Wage inequality has contributed to Social Security's erosion.
- **Comprehensive immigration reform** also directly affects the number of workers paying into the system. Immigration increases the number of workers and payroll taxes, even if the immigrants aren't authorized.
- **Changing Social Security rules** such as the spousal benefit and the work penalty.

Currently, partners married for at least a decade are eligible for the higher of two benefits: one based on their highest 35 years of earnings or one that is half of their partner's benefit, which is based on the partner's highest 35 years of earnings. Spouses who never worked and those who worked but with gaps for parent or child caregiving may both end up with half their partner's benefit despite work history differences.

Social Security reduces benefits for retirees who claim before reaching full retirement age and imposes a retirement earnings test that reduces benefits further for those who earn more than $24,480 annually – with benefit amounts lowered by $1 for every $2 earned above the cap. "The Retirement Earnings Test was passed during the Great Depression, specifically to push older Americans out of the workforce and free up more jobs for younger Americans," Sen. Rick Scott, R-Florida, said in a March statement introducing a bill to repeal it. "But as we are all aware– it's not the 1930s anymore."

Other work-friendly policies could include eliminating "benefits cliffs," said Stephen Roll, assistant professor in the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Benefits cliffs are when government benefits programs create difficult tradeoffs for low-wage workers. Workers often must choose between earning or saving more and losing eligibility for or facing reductions in food, health care, housing, and childcare assistance that are worth more than any added income.

"These policy-design choices may place workers in a position where taking a raise, accepting more hours, or building emergency savings could make them worse off financially," Roll said.

The government could consider, for example, gradually reducing benefits as earnings rise, rather than allowing a relatively small raise to produce a much larger loss in assistance, he said.

"The simple idea here is that people should always be better off financially when they earn more," Roll said.

"These cliffs make it so an individual could lose thousands of dollars in benefits if they take a 50-cent-an-hour raise. Programs with these cliffs should instead shift to phaseout structures, like the Earned Income Tax Credit, to avoid these major work disincentives."

Although Roll doesn't tie his benefits cliffs analysis to Social Security insolvency issues, other economists say any policies to encourage work and higher wages would inevitably help.

What about AI's effect on labor?

So far, studies show artificial intelligence has mostly cut employment (16%) for early career workers in occupations most exposed to AI, such as software development and customer support, according to a 2025 Stanford report.

But Philip Diehl, former U.S. mint director during the Clinton administration and president of gold and precious metals dealer U.S. Money Reserve, said he expects AI to take a bigger toll in coming years that will hit Social Security.

"There's a painful transition coming during which new jobs will be created at a slower pace and require new skill sets that the older generation doesn't have," he said. "These older employees who don't make the transition will retire earlier and take benefits, which has an immediate effect on Social Security. Then, there's to what extent AI will reduce jobs and reduce pay for jobs. There is some evidence of reduced pay for jobs more exposed to AI."

Lower wages mean less money to tax for Social Security.

"None of these factors are reflected in the latest estimates for Social Security insolvency," he said. That means insolvency could come even sooner than 2032, he said.

To prepare for that, Diehl said Congress should start working on a plan "to move funding from labor to capital – taxing wealth, assets, and income at a higher level," he said.

Government could also begin preparing the workforce for AI disruption, Edwards said.

"AI's impact is determined by the extent to which policymakers help affected workers reenter the workforce. That has less to do with technology and more with policymakers' ability and effectiveness," she said.

"The biggest threat to Social Security is mismanaging the economy," Edwards said.

Charter

Continued from Page 1B

and grow in America, cement the role of the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency, and keep America the crypto capital of the world."

The Treasury Department did not comment in response to USA TODAY's inquiry about the chartering process or potential ethical implications, but the approval letter from the Office of Comptroller of Currency describes public comments that claimed there could be conflicts of interest because Trump appointed the comptroller.

"The comptroller and staff acted consistently with their (legal) duties and ethical obligations with respect to the application," the letter says.

It further says that career staff, not the comptroller himself, supervise and enforce laws related to banks such as World Liberty Financial.

'Not a joke'

In a statement, David Wachsman, spokesperson for World Liberty Financial, pointed to language in the preliminary conditional approval letter designed to keep the Trump-owned family company that owns a stake in World Liberty Financial separate from banking operations.

"In plain English, it requires the Trump family entity to remain separate from the trust company's operations and prevents it from influencing how the company is run," Wachsman said. "These safeguards were included specifically to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest."

The charter is preliminary and requires the company to notify the Office of Comptroller of Currency of any major business plan changes, maintain at least $20 million in capital and hire an internal audit manager.

"Critics are missing the point: World Liberty Financial is embracing regulation, not avoiding it," Wachsman said.

"A national charter would place World Liberty Trust Company under permanent federal oversight ... well beyond the Trump administration."

Catalini, who generally supports regulating crypto more similarly to banks, said a future Democratic president could choose to appoint someone who regulates the company differently.

"Being regulated as a bank is not a joke," he said.

"I think in the long run this is going to be a net benefit for society."

Contributing: Reuters

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Tuscaloosa: The United Way of West Alabama on Aug. 11 kicked off its 2026 campaign drive with a goal of raising $5 million.

ALASKA Skagway: The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has suspended state ferry service to Skagway indefinitely after major structural damage was discovered at the town's state-owned ferry dock, KHNS reported.

ARKANSAS Hot Springs: The iconic Planters NUTmobile, a 26-foot peanut-shaped vehicle, is scheduled to visit Hot Springs on Aug. 26 for a free public event at the Mid-America Science Museum, KARK reported.

CALIFORNIA Sacramento: California is phasing out use of a highly toxic herbicide almost two years after state lawmakers launched an investigation into its health risks and five months after a spill of the concentrated chemical closed a rural Siskiyou County town. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation said that as of the first week of August, every pesticide manufacturing company that used paraquat in California had voluntarily canceled their state paraquat product registrations.

COLORADO Denver: Robotaxis are getting closer to a big launch in Denver. Waymo already has its autonomous vehicles, often referred to by others as robotaxis, driving in the city for training. That puts it on track to start providing rides in Denver through its app before the year is out. Denver would be Waymo's first city where vehicles could routinely face snowy conditions, an important feat for launching in other markets outside of the Sunbelt.

CONNECTICUT New Haven: New Haven officials have unveiled a low-cost, after-school initiative that will offer care and enrichment programs for up to 2,000 elementary and middle school students, WFSB reported.

DELAWARE Seaford: State officials have closed a fishing pier on the Nanticoke River in Seaford due to structural concerns.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: The Savannah Bananas will return to Washington, DC's Nationals Park on Oct. 10 for the inaugural Banana Bowl championship tournament featuring all six Banana Ball teams, WUSA9 reported.

FLORIDA Orlando: A popular Florida resort is under contract for a staggering $1.38 billion. Ryman Hospitality Properties is a definitive agreement to purchase Grande Lakes Orlando Resort. The seller is Trinity Investments.

GEORGIA Beaufort County: Beaufort County Mosquito Control said additional West Nile virus-positive mosquito samples were reported on Aug. 10 in the county, less than a month after first reporting other cases in July.

HAWAII Honolulu: Public memorial services honoring former Gov. George Ariyoshi, the state's longest-serving governor and the first Asian American elected governor in U.S. history, will be held Sept. 18-19 in Honolulu, Hawaii News Now reported.

IDAHO Boise: State officials said Idaho has spent about $31 million on wildfire suppression this year as nearly 700,000 acres have burned statewide during an especially active fire season, Idaho Capital Sun reported.

ILLINOIS Springfield: A 25-foot-tall Cozy Dog topped with neon mustard and ketchup has been added to the Illinois Route 66 Experience at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield. The installation was unveiled Aug. 13 and celebrates one of Springfield's best-known Route 66 attractions, according to a community announcement.

INDIANA Lafayette: Recent conversations around the use of Flock cameras and the rise of AI have prompted Lafayette leaders to form a new advisory committee in an effort to focus on public transparency. The city of Lafayette will establish a Technology and Privacy Advisory Committee to review the city's use of technology and related policies, with a particular focus on transparency, accountability, privacy and the protection of residents' constitutional rights.

IOWA Des Moines: The fourth day of the 2026 Iowa State Fair saw 123,140 people attend, a record for the first Sunday of the fair. The previous record for the first Sunday was 115,048, which was set in 2024.

HIGHLIGHT: ARIZONA

National Park Service biologists have trapped invasive species including crayfish in this slough and other backwaters just below Glen Canyon Dam.
BRANDON LOOMIS/USA TODAY NETWORK

Flagstaff: Crayfish have joined the list of non-native species massing below Glen Canyon Dam for a potential invasion of the Grand Canyon, raising alarms from conservationists who want to protect pristine tributary streams in the national park. National Park Service biologists say the invasive species that has caused ecological havoc in other streams has now shown up by the thousands in agency nets below the dam. They netted more than 3,000 so far this year in a short stretch of the Colorado River where last year they found just over two dozen, Park Service Colorado River Coordinator Nicki Gibney told members of an advisory group that works to minimize the dam's environmental impacts.

KANSAS Topeka: Evergy is planning to build more power plants to serve Kansas as the electric utility experiences a boom in demand from data centers.

KENTUCKY Covington: Benjamin Keebler will spend time in federal prison after telling staff of Rep. Thomas Massie that he wanted to shoot the congressman in the head. He also threatened a U.S. senator with a "hammer visit."

LOUISIANA Alexandria: Coca-Cola UNITED announced that it will invest $106 million to expand and modernize warehouse operations at its Alexandria location.

MAINE Wells: If ever there were a year for the Wells town clerk to uncover a long-lost local transcription of the Declaration of Independence, this is it. Town Clerk Michele Stivaletta-Noble recently discovered a handwritten copy prepared by one of her predecessors and read aloud by a Wells minister shortly after the nation's Founding Fathers drafted and signed the document in the summer of 1776.

MARYLAND Greenbelt: A federal judge blocked a Trump administration plan to relocate the new FBI headquarters to Washington, DC, rather than in Maryland, which had been picked in 2023 to host the building. U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang sided with the Democratic-led state of Maryland and Prince George's County in ruling the administration had unlawfully scrapped a plan to construct a new FBI headquarters in Greenbelt, Maryland, and diverted money approved by Congress for that project to an alternate location, the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington.

MASSACHUSETTS Boston: Harvard University agreed to pay $53 million to resolve lawsuits by families alleging it mishandled the bodies of loved ones donated to its medical school and whose parts were then sold on the black market by the former manager of its morgue.

MICHIGAN Delta Township: LG Energy Solution officials welcomed lawmakers and media for a tour of the newly-opened LG battery plant in Delta Township for an official opening ceremony on Aug. 18. Production at the $2.6 billion, 2.8 million-square-foot facility is expected to ramp up in August.

MINNESOTA Minneapolis: Minnesota sued Texas Gov. Greg Abbott for refusing to extradite a federal immigration agent facing assault charges for shooting a Venezuelan man in the leg in Minneapolis during last winter's deportation surge.

MISSISSIPPI Jackson: Jackson city leaders have approved plans that could transform one of the capital city's most visible long-vacant properties along the Interstate 55 corridor into a residential and recreational development.

MISSOURI Rolla: Missouri University of Science and Technology has received $450,000 from the Missouri Department of Transportation to study whether key components in concrete bridge girders can be redesigned to reduce manufacturing costs while maintaining safety and durability.

MONTANA Beaverhead County: Gov. Greg Gianforte said Montana received a FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant to help combat the Sand Creek Fire, the state's largest active wildfire, as it continues to grow beyond 30,000 acres, The Daily Montanan reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: Gov. Jim Pillen appointed 17 members to a new Data Center Task Force that will study how the rapidly growing industry affects the state's water, energy and infrastructure resources, KOLN reported.

NEVADA Carson City: Nearly two-thirds of Nevada voters would support raising the state's tobacco tax, according to a new survey commissioned by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Nevada Current reported.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Concord: Enrollment in the state's school voucher-like program, known as Education Freedom Accounts, is up 25% for the upcoming academic year, New Hampshire Public Radio reported. There are 12,500 students enrolled, and the Children's Scholarship Fund, which operates the program, said 943 students are on its waitlist, according to the news outlet.

NEW JERSEY Piscataway: A new groundwater cleanup plan has been proposed for a long-contaminated industrial site in the township. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has released a proposed plan for the Chemsol Inc. Superfund site that targets groundwater contamination that has spread beyond the former facility.

NEW MEXICO Tucumcari: A new Turquoise Child Development Center facility has opened in Tucumcari, adding space for 55 children and more than doubling the program's capacity to expand child care access in Quay County, KRQE reported.

NEW YORK Buffalo: Three nursing homes in the Buffalo area will repay $9 million after an investigation found they submitted tens of thousands of fraudulent claims to Medicaid to increase their reimbursement rates, New York Attorney General Letitia James announced.

NORTH CAROLINA Belmont: Gaston College's Kimbrell Campus will become the headquarters of FutureTEX, a new Manufacturing Innovation Institute focused on expanding U.S. capabilities in fibers, textiles and advanced materials manufacturing. The initiative is a 10-year Department of War effort designed to modernize domestic textile production and strengthen support for the defense industry, according to a news release.

NORTH DAKOTA Fargo: Gov. Kelly Armstrong has declared a statewide drought disaster and activated the state's Livestock Disaster Fund for the first time since 2021 as worsening dry conditions continue to impact farmers and ranchers, KVRR reported.

OHIO Cincinnati: A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement official based near Cincinnati is no longer working for the agency amid criminal cases in state and federal court.

OKLAHOMA McCurtain County: RWE and Google have signed a 15-year power purchase agreement for the total output of a 155-megawatt solar project planned for McCurtain County, marking the major German multinational energy company's first solar development in Oklahoma.

OREGON Salem: The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted new regulations Aug. 14 aimed at reducing whale entanglements in the state's commercial Dungeness crab fishery. They include requirements for electronic vessel monitoring, and for experimental fishing permits that will pilot the use of pop-up fishing gear, which is safer for whales.

PENNSYLVANIA Harrisburg: Gov. Josh Shapiro signed an executive order that would require companies setting up AI data centers in the state to meet environmental and transparency safeguards and secure local community approval for the projects.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: Installation of new automated license plate reader cameras in Rhode Island may be paused and a 60-day review will be conducted to establish standards on the use of the cameras and the data they collect.

SOUTH CAROLINA Myrtle Beach: President Donald Trump is expected to campaign in Myrtle Beach on Aug. 21 on behalf of a Republican candidate running for U.S. Senate.

SOUTH DAKOTA Sioux Falls: Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sioux Falls, in partnership with the City of Sioux Falls, broke ground Aug. 11 on its second affordable housing development, marking a major step toward adding 16 new owner-occupied homes on the city's north side.

TENNESSEE Knoxville: The University of Tennessee at Knoxville estimates its fall 2026 enrollment at more than 41,000 students, marking another record-breaking year for the university.

TEXAS Houston: Bristol Myers Squibb is bringing a $2.3 billion drug manufacturing campus and 500 jobs to Houston. The New Jersey-based pharmaceutical manufacturer said it had selected the city for the 600,000-square-foot campus, which will be built to speed up the delivery of what it calls "next-generation medicines to patients."

UTAH Moab: Utah wildlife officials removed four bears from Moab after extreme drought and food shortages drove the animals into the city in search of food, KUTV reported.

VERMONT South Burlington: One way local groups can get money from South Burlington is disappearing. The city plans instead to focus on funding mental health support and drug-use treatment, using opioid settlement money. It's a pivot from the city's usual approach – opening up small grants to all sorts of social services organizations – to put money toward problems at the root of public safety concerns and to services that specifically help South Burlington residents.

VIRGINIA Augusta County: The Augusta County Community Development Department and the Friends of the Middle River are teaming up for a clean-up event Aug. 20.

WASHINGTON SeaTac: The Port of Seattle approved initial funding for a $2.5 billion overhaul of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's aging S Concourse, KING5 reported.

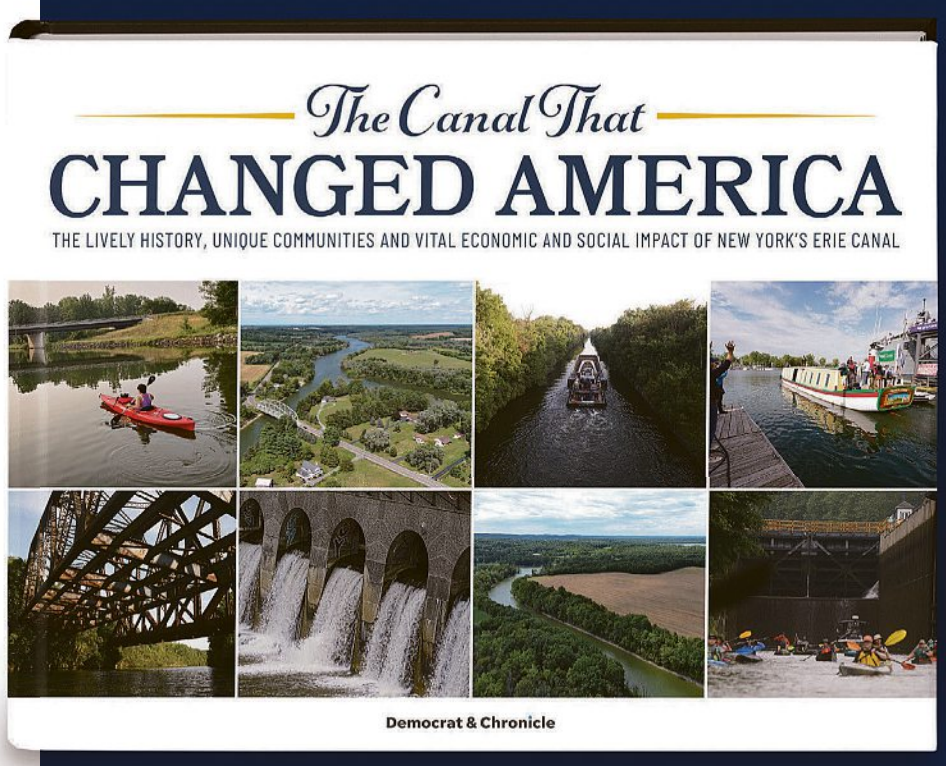
WEST VIRGINIA Belmont: Power producer NRG Energy has been named as a potential suitor for a West Virginia coal plant that landed in bankruptcy with $13 million in cash and several profitable years ahead of it, a court filing shows.

WISCONSIN Beaver Dam: A partnership between Meta and Inspire WI will bring expanded career readiness opportunities and a new student leadership program to Dodge County high school students. The initiative will support Inspire WI's Academic and Career Planning efforts across the county during the 2026-27 and 2027-28 school years, according to a community announcement.

WYOMING Cheyenne: Wyoming Game and Fish Department data show sage-grouse lek attendance fell 13% in 2026 from the previous year, a decline biologists attribute to the species' natural population cycle and dry habitat conditions across the state, The Sheridan Press reported.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

Discover the history and beauty of the Erie Canal in a hardcover book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CHANGED AMERICA
THE LIVELY HISTORY, UNIQUE COMMUNITIES AND VITAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF NEW YORK'S ERIE CANAL
Democrat & Chronicle

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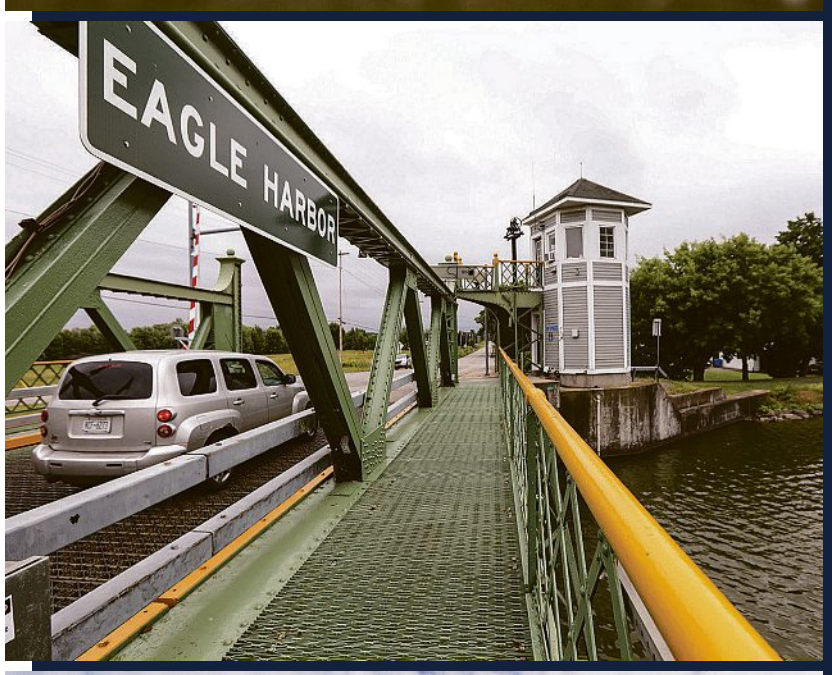

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Democrat & Chronicle

Solomon Tuliaupupu, reacting after a sack, started in 12 of the 14 games he played in 2025 for the Montana Grizzlies. His season was highlighted by being named second team All-Big Sky and he earned Academic All-Big Sky honors, too. The graduate student was granted eligibility for 2026, nine years after first committing to the USC Trojans in January 2018. TOMMY MARTINO/MONTANA ATHLETICS

Wild yes but ... inspirational

The college football story that sounds ridiculous until you hear the whole truth

Jordan Mendoza USA TODAY

Just as Bobby Kennedy arrived as a Stanford assistant in 2018, he knew of a highly touted recruit out of vaunted Southern California powerhouse Mater Dei: Solomon Tuliaupupu.

As a receivers coach, Kennedy didn't think much of the linebacker, other than knowing he played a role in the Monarchs' undefeated national championship season in 2017. The coach spent four seasons at Stanford, took a year off coaching and spent a season at Rice in 2024. He arrived at Montana last season and was promoted for 2026.

And in his first season as a head coach, who will he have on his team? Well, none other than that SoCal recruit all those years ago.

In an era of college sports when it seems like player eligibility is unlimited, no one may exemplify it like Tuliaupupu, who enters his ninth – yes, ninth – season of college football.

To casual football fans, it's a preposterous headline. There were plenty of people up in arms when he received his ninth season of eligibility in February. Why would someone in the same recruiting class as Trevor Lawrence, Micah Parsons, Ja'Marr Chase and graduate high school with Amon-Ra St. Brown still be playing college football in 2026?

It sounds ridiculous, yet it's anything but to the 26-year-old. "I totally understand how some people could be frustrated about just hearing my story, without having all the context and clues," he told USA TODAY Sports.

To Tuliaupupu, a ninth season represents overcoming a long, painful road, one that nearly made him walk away from the game he loves multiple times. Did he want it to go like this? No, but he doesn't regret any part of the journey.

"It's a special story," Kennedy said.

Tuliaupupu had his future mapped out perfectly in high school. He was going to play college ball for three seasons and make it to the NFL. He had the tools to do so as the No. 54 overall recruit in the 2018 class and the 2017 USA TODAY All-USA National Defensive Player of the Year.

However, that plan got off course before high school finished.

After no injury history, he twisted his left ankle in fall camp of his senior year and did it again during the season. Painful, but still powering through as he tried to finish the season.

Then came the playoff semifinal against Mission Viejo, when he suffered a left Lisfranc tear. He wanted to play on it but recalled doctors telling him doing so would "do irreversible damage to your whole foot."

Tuliaupupu decided to have the reconstructive surgery, and in January 2018, he lived the dream of committing to the Trojans. The start to that, though, was disrupted.

There were risks of the surgery not being entirely successful, and it ended up not working. His first summer at USC was spent doing rehab, and he eventually got put in an immobile cast that meant sitting out all of his first year.

See INSPIRATIONAL, Page 2C

PRESEASON ALL-AMERICANS

The nation's best players play on the nation's best teams. It's funny how that works out. The USA TODAY Sports preseason All-America college football team for 2026 features standouts from the favorites for this year's College Football Playoff, with multiple first- and second-team selections from Oregon, Ohio State, Indiana, Georgia and Texas, including Oregon quarterback Dante Moore (above). Who made the team, 2C BEN LONERGAN/THE (EUGENE, OREGON) REGISTER-GUARD

PGA Tour Playoffs lacking real drama

Adam Schupak
Golfweek | USA TODAY Network

ST. LOUIS – Ryan Gerard is on the verge of completing his top goal for the season, something he's never accomplished on the PGA Tour. Gerard, 27, enters the BMW Championship ranked No. 17 in the seasonlong FedExCup points race and looks to be a lock to finish in the Top 30. That would punch his ticket to the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta.

"That's my white whale," he said. "I told myself if I got to East Lake, it'd be a successful season. That's the barometer. It gets you in all the majors, a two-year exemption and it means you've had a solid season. Then I'll go to Atlanta

See PGA TOUR, Page 3C

EXCLUSIVE

Cunningham wants more game talk

Meghan L. Hall
USA TODAY

ATLANTA – Indiana Fever guard Sophie Cunningham is signing autographs for a sea of screaming fans ahead of a matchup against the Atlanta Dream of Aug. 16.

"Sophie! Sophie! Sophie!" they shout, hanging over the railing at State Farm Arena with outstretched arms. Cunningham has a mountain of items waiting for her signature. A jersey. A deflated basketball. A pair of her adidas Crazy Energy "Sophie Cunningham" PE shoes that sold out on July 24, the same day they debuted.

See CUNNINGHAM, Page 3C

Fever guard Sophie Cunningham averages 8.8 points, 2.4 rebounds and 1.2 assists. TREVOR RUSZKOWSKI/IMAGN IMAGES

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PRESEASON ALL-AMERICA TEAM

Moore wins QB debate in USA TODAY reveal

Paul Myerberg
USA TODAY

The nation's best players play on the nation's best teams. It's funny how that works out.

The USA TODAY Sports preseason All-America college football team for 2026 features standouts from the favorites for this year's College Football Playoff, with multiple first- and second-team selections from Oregon, Ohio State, Indiana, Georgia and Texas.

The biggest debate might have come at quarterback, where Oregon's Dante Moore earned first-team accolades over Ohio State's Julian Sayin.

On the other hand, there was no debate over the three players who earned unanimous first-team honors: Ole Miss running back Kewan Lacy, Ohio State wide receiver Jeremiah Smith and Notre Dame cornerback Leonard Moore.

Voting was conducted by more than 20 college football writers and editors in the USA TODAY Sports Network. Our results are below. An asterisk denotes a unanimous choice.

Ohio State receiver Jeremiah Smith led the Big Ten with 87 catches for 1,243 yards in 2025. BRETT DAVIS/IMAGN IMAGES

First-team offense

- **QB:** Dante Moore, Oregon

Moore opted to come back to Oregon after throwing for 3,565 yards and 30 touchdowns in 2025, his first season as the starter after transferring from UCLA.

- **RB:** Kewan Lacy, Mississippi*
- **RB:** Ahmad Hardy, Missouri

Lacy (1,567 yards and 24 touchdowns in 2025) joins quarterback Trinidad Chambliss to give the Rebels the best backfield pairing in the country. While overlooked nationally, Hardy poured in 1,649 yards on 6.4 yards per carry last season.

- **WR:** Jeremiah Smith, Ohio State*
- **WR:** Malachi Toney, Miami
- **TE:** Jamari Johnson, Oregon

Smith is the pound-for-pound best player in college football and has a chance this season to cement his place among the best players at his position in modern history. Toney (1,211 yards in 2025) is a do-everything skill talent for the Hurricanes. After making 32 grabs last season, Johnson is expected to play an even larger role for the Ducks in 2026.

- **OT:** Carter Smith, Indiana
- **OT:** Trevor Goosby, Texas
- **C:** Iapani Laloulu, Oregon
- **OG:** Evan Tengesdahl, Cincinnati
- **OG:** Kade Pieper, Iowa

Smith is the anchor of what should again be a bruising and intimidating Indiana offensive front. Goosby's decision to come back to Texas will give Arch Manning an elite blind-side protector. Laloulu leads the way for an Oregon running game that averaged 5.4 yards per carry and had 35 touchdowns last season. After an often brilliant first year as a starter in 2025, Tengesdahl will be in the mix for national hardware even if the Bearcats fail to move beyond the seven-win mark. Pieper can play multiple spots along the interior and would be an All-America candidate at center, too.

First-team defense

- **DE:** Colin Simmons, Teas
- **DE:** Dylan Stewart, South Carolina
- **DT:** A'Mauri Washington, Oregon
- **DT:** Tyrique Tucker, Indiana

Simmons delivered a breakout 2025 (15 ½ tackles for loss, 12 sacks) and is at times the most unstoppable edge rusher in the nation. When healthy, Stewart (12 tackles for loss in 2025) isn't far behind. Washington is a force along the interior of what looks like the best defensive front in the Power Four. Tucker (12 tackles for loss in 2025) is simply a wrecking ball.

- **LB:** Rasheem Biles, Texas
- **LB:** Rolijah Hardy, Indiana
- **LB:** Sammy Brown, Clemson

A very strong 2025 at Pitt (101 tackles, 17 tackles for loss) paints Biles as one of the most impactful transfers in the Power Four. Hardy led the defending champions in tackles (102) and sacks (eight) while adding 15 tackles for loss. Brown (106 tackles) is the centerpiece of a Clemson defense that may be the best in the ACC.

- **CB:** Leonard Moore, Notre Dame*
- **CB:** Brandon Finney, Oregon
- **S:** KJ Bolden, Georgia
- **S:** Bray Hubbard, Alabama

Moore is rarely tested by quarterbacks but still manages to make plays (five interceptions, one returned for a score in 2025) as the nation's best defensive back. Finney came up big with two interceptions in the Orange Bowl win against Texas Tech. It's easy to slot Bolden (76 tackles, two interceptions in 2025) among the run of elite safeties under Kirby Smart at Georgia. Hubbard has posted seven interceptions since stepping into Alabama's lineup in 2024.

First-team specialists

- **K:** Tate Sandell, Oklahoma
- **P:** Evan Crenshaw, Troy
- **RET:** Da'Realyst Clark, Kent State
- **AP:** Wayne Knight, UCLA

Sandell was terrific in 2025 (24 of 27 field goals) and at his best from long distance, making eight of nine attempts from 50-plus yards. Averaging 45.7 yards per punt last year made Crenshaw the first Troy player since the program joined the FBS to earn All-America honors from multiple selectors in the same season. Clark averaged 28.3 yards per kickoff return with two scores in 2025. Knight followed new UCLA coach Bob Chesney from James Madison, where he ran for 1,373 yards and had 397 receiving yards in last year's playoff push.

Second-team offense

- **QB:** Julian Sayin, Ohio State
- **RB:** LJ Martin, BYU
- **RB:** Mark Fletcher, Miami
- **WR:** Cam Coleman, Texas
- **WR:** Nick Marsh, Indiana
- **TE:** Trey'Dez Green, LSU
- **OT:** Cayden Green, Missouri
- **OT:** Jordan Seaton, LSU
- **C:** Drew Bobo, Georgia
- **OG:** Greg Johnson, Minnesota
- **OG:** Anthonie Knapp, Notre Dame

Second-team defense

- **DE:** Anthony Smith, Minnesota
- **DE:** John Henry Daley, Michigan
- **DT:** AJ Holmes, Texas Tech
- **DT:** Ahmad Moten, Miami
- **LB:** Kip Lewis, Oklahoma
- **LB:** Xavier Atkins, Auburn
- **LB:** Raylen Wilson, Georgia
- **CB:** Zabien Brown, Alabama
- **CB:** Ellis Robinson, Georgia
- **S:** Koi Perich, Oregon
- **S:** Bryce Fitzgerald, Miami

Second-team specialists

- **K:** Lucas Carneiro, Ole Miss
- **P:** Palmer Williams, Baylor
- **RET:** Ryan Niblett, Texas
- **AP:** J'Koby Williams, Texas Tech

Inspirational

Continued from Page 1C

Tuliaupupu was on the field in spring of 2019 when he had another Lisfranc tear. This one wasn't as severe, but he was again told surgery was needed or he faced the same possible consequences. A fusion was done so he wouldn't have to worry about tearing it again, but this meant another boot, another instance of limited mobility.

"If you add that together, it's like over a year of not using your foot," he said.

Two seasons down the drain, but there was optimism in 2020. He was ready for spring ball – until COVID-19 lockdowns halted that.

Given how turbulent the Pac-12's football plans were that year, USC didn't start fall practice until October. Tuliaupupu was feeling strong going into it, and in the first week, he was doing a drill where he planted his foot, and he didn't feel his left foot give out.

Instead, it was his left knee. He tore his anterior cruciate ligament. A third straight season not playing.

"At that point I'm like, 'Alright, what the heck is happening with my body?' " Tuliaupupu said. "I don't know what's going on."

It was 2021 when Tuliaupupu was finally ready to play, and he awaited a debut against Stanford, expecting to be on the special teams unit. That didn't happen, and just his luck, it wasn't long before his left knee started to feel funny again.

He met with medical professionals, and they advised him to focus on recovery to figure out what's going on. The plan of three years and the NFL turned into four years and injured for it all.

That season was when Clay Helton was fired from USC, and in November, Lincoln Riley came in to lead the Trojans. He and his incoming staff did player evaluations on the roster, and Tuliaupupu's history was hard to ignore.

He was cut.

"I kept calling them," he said. "I was like, 'Hey, please, just give me a shot. Just give me a shot. I feel like I haven't even got a shot in my college career yet, man.' "

After persisting, Tuliaupupu was given a spring tryout. He proved he belonged, earning his spot on the roster. He was again ready to go for the season, and this time he actually did it.

Switching to the defensive line, Tuliaupupu appeared in all 14 games for the Trojans en route to a Cotton Bowl appearance. Not even a torn biceps late in the season stopped him.

The momentum of the first full season carried Tuliaupupu into earning a starting spot going into the fall camp of 2023. He was eager for an expanded role. But during a preseason practice, he planted his foot and again felt something wrong.

It was his right knee. He tore the other ACL. Another season gone before it begins.

Even with all the pain before, this one was different. In five years, injuries derailed four of them. Family and friends were constantly asking if he was sure he still wanted to play. He'd treat them like they were crazy, telling them of course he still wants to be on field. He'd puff his chest out and let everyone know he was built for this.

But inside, Tuliaupupu was struggling. He did wonder if football was really meant for him.

"I don't know if this is for me," he recalled. "There's nights I just stay up and cry, and I go lift some weights to feel better. Then I'd want to feel sad again, start crying again, and just go lift some more weights."

Support from family didn't waver, specifically, from his wife, Olivia. She was in his corner every time doubt crept in. They also were expecting their first child.

The 2024 season arrived and Tuliaupupu was good, not missing a beat from the jump. However, the day after USC played Nebraska, he got sick – and it got pretty bad.

He had influenza A, resulting in high fevers and losing 20 pounds in a quick span. Any time he tried doing any physical work, he was throwing up, and he missed the rest of the season. It was worse trying to help care for his newborn baby.

"That sickness really scared me," Tuliaupupu said. "I never felt that sick before. I thought I was gonna die. I was mad."

By the time he recovered, Tuliaupupu walked into Riley's office and told him it was time to retire. He thanked him for letting him continue his dream of being a Trojan, but he didn't think he had anything left in him. Not only did he retire, he was actually hunting for a job to support his family.

However, a few months later Tuliaupupu realized he had an extra year of eligibility. After the NCAA confirmed it, he sat down with Olivia and decided to enter the transfer portal, seeing if anyone would offer.

The initial process was rough. A true linebacker who turned into a defensive end, he wanted to go back to his old position, but schools were only offering him at the edge. Each time he expressed that to potential suitors, talks fell through.

There weren't any leads until Montana, whose coaches told him he could play linebacker. That's all it took for him to move from Southern California to Missoula.

In his first year with the Grizzlies, Tuliaupupu had his best season with 43 tackles, two sacks and two forced fumbles, earning second team All-Big Sky. He played in 14 of Montana's 15 games on its way to a Football Championship Subdivision semifinal appearance, only missing one game to help care for his wife after her dad died, something he had no hesitation doing.

That wouldn't be the end of it. Around the 2025 postseason, Tuliaupupu said Montana staff members said they could maybe get him ninth year. He didn't even realize it was possible.

"I (expletive) you not, I was like tearing up," he said. "I was like, dude, I've been looking for jobs and like I was getting a lot of interest from jobs. If you guys can give me another year, I will play. I'll play however many extra years you guys get me."

A few weeks went by without an update, resulting in Tuliaupupu getting ready for the job market again. In February, after longtime coach Bobby Hauck announced his retirement, Tuliaupupu got the good news: He was granted a ninth season.

There was jubilation in Missoula.

"I was the happiest guy in America," Kennedy said.

Then came the announcement of it.

"Everyone in the whole freaking country is like roasting my ass," Tuliaupupu said.

Just about everyone at Montana understands it may be silly for Tuliaupupu to play a ninth season.

He does hear it from his teammates, referring to him as "unc" and calling just about everyone "youngblood."

Defensive coordinator Eric Sanders admitted there were staff members who graduated high school around the same time as Tuliaupupu, and they had a PowerPoint presentation where they went through all of the fashion stages he went through in his college career.

It's all in fun, but that's not how everyone sees it. Tuliaupupu has gotten his fair share of trolls and unpleasant comments, telling him to get a job or it's ridiculous to still be playing. It used to really bother him, but now some of it does humor him. It actually fires him up.

"Sometimes it's kind of like it's fuel for me to do good this next year and be like, alright, you guys want to talk on that smack? Alright, I'm gonna show you then," he said. "It's funny, but at the same time, it's like, alright, cool. I got some ammo."

Besides, it's not like he's been playing all of the first eight years. In the 98 games in those eight seasons, he's played in just 38 contests.

Missing basically five seasons of action is more than enough reason to stop playing. But Tuliaupupu didn't, and that should be viewed as inspiration.

"It takes a guy with great fortitude and belief in himself that they can come through on the other end. That's what I see with Solo," Kennedy said. "We only get so long to play this game, and if he's having a good experience at the University of Montana, then heck, I would say this: I want him around as long as we can keep him. Hey, let's get him an 11th or 12th year."

Double-digit years may be pushing it, and don't worry. Tuliaupupu is pretty sure this is the final year – and he's excited.

Coaches describe him as a true leader on a team under a new coaching staff. Sanders said he was the first player he talked to when he was hired to pick his brain. He added Tuliaupupu has been a vocal leader, able to distinguish what it takes for his teammates to succeed.

"He's a father to young kids and so he's got a little bit of an ability to be a goofball too and he just has a good personality," Sanders said. "Obviously have the maturity that is required to be a father and be responsible for other people, but he also can be a goof and make jokes, and that enables him to connect with his teammates."

While a strong final year is what Tuliaupupu wants, it's not his ultimate goal in 2026. Really, he wants to inspire his teammates and people who learn just an ounce of his journey.

"Instead of just fuel for anger, what I do hope (people) get is some inspiration of not giving up. Even when your hardest year of life comes, even when you feel like everything's falling in on you and there's nowhere else to go, just get up, dust yourself off, and just keep going," he said. "The only way to live it is to keep going."

So yes, Tuliaupupu will play a ninth season of college football.

The path was nothing he envisioned, but he didn't quit. Tuliaupupu entered college as a highly touted prospect and will leave full of battle scars he proudly shows off.

With his wife and two kids – with one more on the way – beside him, Tuliaupupu is standing tall, ready to end his college career strong.

It's been a long and painful road, but he is grateful for every bump he endured, and persevering to finish out his dream the right way.

"It's nowhere near been how I planned it when I was coming out of high school. I'm so grateful the way the Lord has worked in my life and kind of just painted this awesome picture that I never saw coming," he said. "I wouldn't write it any other way."

PGA Tour

Continued from Page 1C

and see if I can make some extra birdies and see what happens."

The 50-man field at Bellerive Country Club will be whittled to 30 this week, and golf fans can only hope that there will be more drama and tension than last week's snoozer at the first playoff stop, the FedEx St. Jude Championship.

There's no stopping Scottie Scheffler when his putter is the best in the field, and he won last week by eight strokes, the most this season on the PGA Tour. But the tournament within the tournament – the cut from 70 to 50 for this week's BMW Championship that begins Aug. 20 – had even less juice.

Sure, golf fans got to watch Keith Mitchell, No. 49 at the start of the week, and Jordan Spieth, No. 52, tighten up under the pressure and come up empty in their desperate pursuit for one last birdie. But only one player – Sungjae Im – moved from outside to inside the top 50, which meant only one fell out.

The PGA Tour reduced the volatility out of the first two legs of the playoffs by reducing the point totals. Instead of 2,000 FedExCup points being awarded to the winner, Scheffler earned 750, the same as The Players Championship.

The tour also abandoned the starting strokes format at the Tour Championship, which had been instituted in 2019 and gave FedExCup leaders a head start in the finale. Now, the last event of the season is a 72-hole stroke-play event with all players starting the tournament at even par. The best performer over the course of four rounds at the Tour Championship wins the FedExCup and the largest purse of the season, $10 million. It was a step in the right direction.

The tour's argument for the change is that a player's regular season shouldn't be easily invalidated by a one-week wonder – or one lackluster week – during the playoffs. Last year, with jacked up points available in the first two playoff events, five players moved into the top 50 with their performance at the St. Jude. But that is the essence of playoffs in other sports. Great season's game earn a first-round bye or home-field advantage, but there's no guarantee that the top team makes the World Series or Super Bowl.

The reduction in point value removed the consequences of playing poorly. Last week, Sahith Theegala finished 67th in a field of 68 (there were two withdrawals) and dropped two spots and didn't have to sweat out falling from the top 50. Rory McIlroy? He finished 66th and dropped from No. 12 to 13.

Last year, McIlroy realized he didn't need to play in Memphis and skipped the event. This time, he admitted he showed up unprepared after a long layoff (it was his first event since the Open Championship in mid-July) and was a nonfactor. Same could be said for Akshay Bhatia, who was dead last in Memphis and fell from No. 14 to 15. British Open champ Ryan Fox finished T-58 but advanced easily, slipping four spots to No. 25. Then there's Robert McIntyre, who withdrew after a first-round 82. He tumbled down the standings, right? Not really: He slipped from No. 31 to 36.

In all, 42 of the players were mathematically guaranteed to play in the BMW regardless of how they finished. There should be more punishment for stinking up the joint at TPC Southwind. Otherwise, this isn't a playoff; it's a money grab and the Tour Championship becomes a glorified version of the Hero World Challenge, the 20-man hitn-giggle in December where everyone gets world ranking points.

While much is on the line at the BMW Championship – from determining the top 30 who advance to East Lake next week to potential Masters invites and the top six automatic qualifiers for the U.S. Presidents Cup team – don't expect much volatility in the FedExCup points list. If you want real excitement this time of year, it's on the Korn Ferry Tour, the PGA Tour's top developmental circuit, where careers are on the line. The Tour Championship? Only two players moved up into the top 30 after Memphis, with Bud Cauley (34th to 29th) and Kurt Kitayama (33rd to 28th) pushing out Gary Woodland (31st from 27th) and J.T. Poston (32nd from 30th). [Rickie Fowler is the Bubble Boy at the start of this week at No. 30.]

Twenty years into the FedExCup Playoffs and it's been an endless game of Whack-a-Mole – fix one flaw and expose another. The Tour has said the 2028 playoffs will be decidedly different – with greater emphasis on highlighting the regular-season champ and with the introduction of match play to spice things up. That can't come soon enough.

Rickie Fowler, playing during the second round of the FedEx St. Jude Championship, is on the bubble at No. 30 this week. STEVE ROBERTS/IMAGN IMAGES

PGA Tour BMW Championship

Course: Bellerive Country Club (Par 70; 7,448 yards) in St. Louis.

TV: Aug. 20-21: 10 a.m.-noon ET (ESPN) and 3-7 p.m. ET (Golf Channel); Aug. 22: 1-3 p.m. ET (Golf Channel) and 3-6 p.m. ET (CBS and Paramount+); Aug. 23: Noon-2 p.m. ET (Golf Channel) and 2-6 p.m. ET (CBS and Paramount+).

Inside the numbers

17 The number of players seeking to advance and make their first Tour Championship appearance: Ryan Gerard, Min Woo Lee, Kristoffer Reitan, Alex Fitzpatrick, Alex Smalley, Ryan Fox, Kurt Kitayama, Bud Cauley, Nicolai Højgaard, Alex Noren, Jake Knapp, Michael Thorbjornsen, Nico Echavarria, Ryo Hisatsune, Michael Brennan, Eric Cole, Matt McCarty. The figure also represents the players in this week's field who competed in the 2018 PGA Championship held at Bellerive, including Adam Scott (third), Justin Thomas (T-6), Gary Woodland (T-6), Rickie Fowler (T-12) who all finished in the top 15; notables who missed the cut that week include Alex Noren, Matt Fitzpatrick and Si Woo Kim.

Keep an eye on

- **Adam Scott.** The Aussie is the only player in this week's field to compete in the 2008 BMW Championship held at Bellerive when he finished T-50. He bettered that performance with a third at the 2018 PGA Championship held here. Scott enters the week at No. 27 in the standings and recorded top-5s in his two most recent starts at the BMW (T-5 in 2022 and T-2 in 2024).
- **Sungjae Im.** The South Korean improved 13 spots in the FedExCup to No. 40 following his T-5 finish last weekend and was the only player to move into the top 50. Im has made the Tour Championship in all seven years on the PGA Tour and owns the second-longest active streak of qualifying for East Lake behind only Rory McIlroy with eight. Im has not spent a single week inside the top 30 this season, marking his fewest weeks inside the top 30 in his career.
- **Rickie Fowler.** He enters the BMW as the Bubble Boy at No. 30. He is making his 13th BMW Championship appearance and seeking his eighth Tour Championship start and first since 2023. He has notched 10 top-25s and five top-10s this season.

Cunningham

Continued from Page 1C

Cunningham's popularity has skyrocketed this season amid a national conversation about transgender athlete inclusion. The WNBA veteran made comments in a July ESPN story about "protecting women's sports" by banning transgender females from participating in leagues for girls and women. Since the interview was published, "Support Sophie Cunningham" demonstrations have become commonplace outside Fever games. Conversations surrounding Cunningham and the WNBA's policy regarding transgender athletes also intensified, prompting her to ask for the focus on the WNBA to return to basketball.

"People are like, 'You have a platform. Use it,' and then once you use it, it's like, 'Go back to playing basketball.' I think the reason why I stated that is because you go into media, and it's not anything even about basketball. I think I could do both," Cunningham told USA TODAY Sports. "Ask me about what's going on and what I said. And also ask me how great my teammates are doing, how great our team is doing, how great the league is doing.

"We can be a great example of how to do both."

Cunningham and the Fever have pressed on during the ongoing chatter, amassing a 24-12 record, including five straight wins. The Fever guard is second in the WNBA in 3-point shooting percentage (44.5%), while her teammate Kelsey Mitchell is fourth at 43.7%. Mitchell, who is second in points per game (24.2) in the WNBA, is also in the middle of a record-breaking streak (20 games) of scoring 20 points or more.

Caitlin Clark, who is averaging a career high in points (22 per game) and field-goal percentage (45%), won player of the week for the fourth time this season on Aug. 18. Fever forward Aliyah Boston is nearly averaging a double-double (17 points and 8.7 rebounds).

Cunningham told USA TODAY she's used to the noise around the Fever because it's been there since 2025. For her, the goal remains the same: "protect our locker room" and highlight the high-level basketball the Fever are playing. For as much as the Missouri native would like to shine a light on basketball, the conversations around her comments remain.

"I think the most important thing is just try to lead by example. Look, it's really challenging, I think, for our team to silence it. You can't silence it," Fever coach Stephanie White said.

"For us, it's how do we minimize it, and how do we use it in a way that brings us closer together. How do we use it in a way that helps us grow not just on the floor but off the floor to become a better basketball team, to become better human beings, to become better teammates, to become better friends, to become better allies? I think that there's all of these different ways that we can minimize it to help us grow."

WNBA's free speech battleground after Cunningham's remarks

On Aug. 17, the WNBA distanced itself from an r/WNBA fan subreddit in the middle of a controversy for appearing to ban mention of Cunningham's name. "The WNBA does not moderate or have any affiliation with the r/WNBA subreddit," a league spokesperson told USA TODAY in a statement.

The subreddit posted a clarification regarding the use of Cunningham's name in the online conversation platform, saying content related to the Fever guard was not banned. "Posts about Sophie are welcome when they are related to basketball, including games, highlights, interviews, statistics, marketing endorsements, and other WNBA-related news. Off-court Sophie content can be shared as well," the statement said.

On Aug. 16, Cunningham fans who attended the Fever vs. Dream matchup said they were "made to cover up" their T-shirts by league security staff at State Farm Arena. Video captured inside the arena and posted on social media shows a mother and daughter covering up their XX-XY Athletics branded shirts with shirts provided by the Dream.

In a statement provided to USA TODAY Sports, the WNBA said the fans shouldn't have been made to cover their clothing. "The WNBA is aware of interactions at last night's game in Atlanta in which fans were asked by league security to cover their shirts," a league spokesperson said. "This should not have happened."

XX-XY Athletics, which bills itself as a brand "here to protect women's sports and spaces," was founded by former gymnast and former Levi Strauss chief marketing officer Jennifer Sey. XX-XY has also been part of rallies around WNBA games this season in "Support of Sophie Cunningham."

Cunningham's comments on transgender athlete participation and the ensuing conversation came after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld states' right to ban transgender females from participation in women's sports. There has not been an openly transgender player in WNBA history.

"It's sort of surprising to be the headline, and I would say the only reason we are is because people who have been censored by the league … they tend to be censored when they're wearing our product," Sey, the XX-XY founder, told USA TODAY Sports. "Obviously, I didn't make that happen. I don't think anyone should be censored at the games. People can wear whatever shirt they want. I'm hearing now that – I saw (on Tuesday) that (outlets are) reporting that several people wearing 'trans kids belong' shirts were told to cover them up. I don't think that should happen either.

"None of these shirts are violent or mean. They express (a) belief. We may not agree, and that's fine. I think everybody should get to wear what they want, and I think the league is making a mistake by attempting to censor anybody."

Cunningham: WNBA leadership future 'up to Adam Silver'

When USA TODAY spoke to Cunningham, she acknowledged WNBA leadership and the league have been under a high amount of scrutiny this season and the spotlight has only intensified as the debate around transgender athletes continues.

Cunningham said anyone in a position of power has a challenging job, but she believes new leadership might help the WNBA. She said the league is changing, and as players have an opportunity to be "trailblazers of what women's leagues can look like," it needs leaders who support the growth.

"You do have to have a person in power who is bold, who is confident, who wants the best for the players and not maybe for themselves all the time. So I do feel like, as a whole, that could be a position that's maybe open at the end of the year, but that's not my call," Cunningham said.

"(Cathy Engelbert's) done a lot of good things, but with where our league is trying to go, I feel like you just want someone who also wants that. That's just a hard position to be in, in her shoes, us as players – we always want more, more, more because we see how good it can be, but … that's up to Adam Silver at the end of the day."

Cunningham and the Fever's season continues in Dallas against Paige Bueckers and the Wings on Thursday, Aug. 20 (8 p.m. ET, Prime Video). While Cunningham doesn't plan to change how she operates, she told USA TODAY she understands the weight of her words.

"When you do have so many eyes on you … that people can use your words for the positive. People can weaponize your words. So that's just how people are. That's how human nature is. So, that's not gonna make me dim my light any more," Cunningham said.

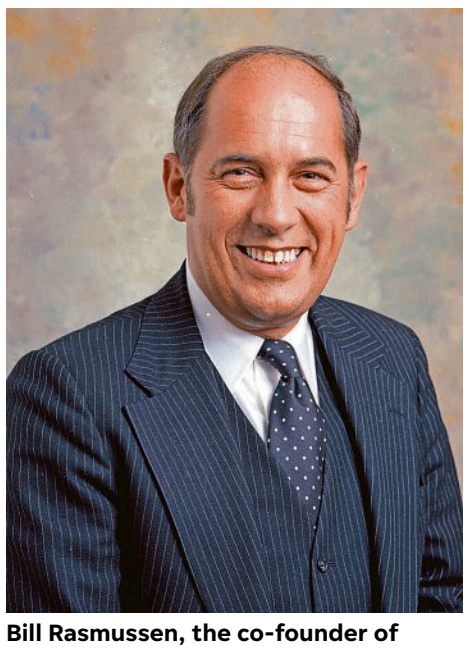
"I try to just show people love and try to go that route, and when people actually talk to me in person, I think they feel that, and I'm arms wide open. So I can't control how other people do stuff, but I do think that you just always have to see how your words can maybe be interpreted by other people. But at the end of the day, if you're constantly doing that, you're going to lose yourself, and so I just try to control what I can control."

APPRECIATION

ESPN founder Bill Rasmussen never forgot his roots

Dana Hunsinger
The Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY Network

ESPN founder Bill Rasmussen, left, and longtime friend Ken Owen. Rasmussen returned to DePauw University in 2017 for the Timothy and Sharon Ubben Lecture Series "Finding Your Passion Realizing Your Dream." PROVIDED BY KEN OWEN



Bill Rasmussen, the co-founder of ESPN PROVIDED BY ESPN

INDIANAPOLIS – Bill Rasmussen, the founder of ESPN and a 1954 graduate of DePauw University who pushed to get the legendary Monon Bell football game on national TV, died Aug. 18 after a battle with Parkinson's disease. Rasmussen was 93.

Rasmussen's death comes 48 years and two days after the moment he blurted out a really crazy idea that not only changed his life, but entirely shifted the way people consume television, launching the 24-hour news cycle.

"Bill was a remarkable man – a visionary and an innovator who conceived the idea of a network entirely devoted to sports," ESPN Chairman Jimmy Pitaro said in a statement announcing Rasmussen's death. "Quite simply, none of us would be here today if it wasn't for Bill's passion and all the hard work and entrepreneurial spirit he put into building ESPN in the late 1970s."

It was Aug. 16, 1978, and the traffic was Friday afternoon gridlock on Connecticut's Interstate 84 as Rasmussen and his son, Scott, made their way to a birthday party on the New Jersey shore.

As they sat at a standstill, the two started talking about possible programming for their newly acquired 24-hour access to a satellite transponder from RCA, a cutting-edge, newfangled technology few knew much about.

Rasmussen was a 45-year-old former sports broadcaster and public relations executive who had been fired three months before from his job as communications director for the New England Whalers of the World Hockey Association.

He was looking for a new way to blend his love of sports with technology.

"So, they were sitting in traffic and stuck and just brainstorming and spitballing," says Ken Owen, former anchor at WRTV and WISH-TV and a friend of Rasmussen. "And Bill came up with the idea of 24-hour-a-day sports.

"With that, he became a major architect of that quantum shift in the way television presented itself."

In July 1979, Rasmussen was named chairman of the 24-hour cable sports network. In September, ESPN launched in Bristol, Connecticut, with 80 employees working inside an unfinished building on less than an acre, which was purchased sight unseen.

As ESPN's founder and first president, Rasmussen shaped the early successes of the company and laid the foundation for its future.

Under Rasmussen's leadership, "SportsCenter" debuted, followed by around the clock sports programming and groundbreaking coverage of the early rounds of the NCAA men's basketball tournament in the spring of 1980, which drew national attention for the upstart cable network.

"Bill was our George Washington and a good friend," said ESPN anchor Chris Berman, who joined the network three weeks after its launch. "He was such a grateful person, and every sports fan can be grateful for Bill. He wasn't a glass half-full guy. His glass was always overflowing with optimism. He greeted everyone with a smile, and we can all smile knowing Bill's legacy."

Rasmussen, a humble, modest man who never seemed to grasp the gravity of his ESPN founding, talked about the early days of the network in a 2019 interview.

"It all started with a $9,000 credit card cash advance," Rasmussen said. "That doesn't go too far when you're buying satellite time and paying people, but it all worked out pretty well."

'The Father of Sports Television'

William F. Rasmussen was born on Oct. 15, 1932, in Chicago and raised in nearby Columbus Manor, Illinois. From the time he could play sports, Rasmussen did, but he especially liked baseball.

After high school, Rasmussen passed up an invitation to a minor league affiliate of the Detroit Tigers and headed to Greencastle, Indiana, to attend DePauw University where he was a Rector Scholar majoring in economics and on the baseball team.

In 1954, after graduating from DePauw, Rasmussen served in the United States Air Force, then later earned an MBA from Rutgers University.

Rasmussen's career in media began in 1962 at WTTT radio in Amherst, Massacusetts. In 1965, he moved to WWLP-TV, Springfield, Massachusetts, where he spent eight years as sports director and two years as news director, working on football, basketball, baseball and hockey play-by-play assignments on both radio and television.

"And Bill came up with the idea of 24-hour-a-day sports. With that, he became a major architect of that quantum shift in the way television presented itself."

Ken Owen
Longtime friend and former TV anchor

In 1974, he joined the New England Whalers, lost that job in 1978, then Rasmussen found himself in a car stuck in traffic with an outrageous idea.

At first Rasmussen and his son launched a network showing Connecticut sports to state residents, but they quickly switched to a 24-hour national sports network.

With financial backing from the Getty Oil Co., a programming contract with the NCAA and an advertising agreement with Anheuser-Busch, then the largest sponsorship deal in cable history, The Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (changed to ESPN, Inc. in 1984) launched in 1.4 million homes at 7 p.m. ET Sept. 7, 1979.

"From Day 1 to today, more than four decades later, SportsCenter – the program that has aired the most episodes in television history – has been the backbone of the network and its signature show," ESPN said in a statement, announcing Rasmussen's death. "(It) redefined the genre of sports news on television."

Owen, a 1982 DePauw graduate, remembers watching ESPN's debut from a house on the same campus Rasmussen called his college home.

"You couldn't have imagined that ESPN would become the cultural force it has become," Owen says. "It's just an iconic brand."

ESPN came on the scene at a time when stations signed off "when you just assumed that nobody wanted to watch television overnight," Owen said. "But the score changed with ESPN. Bill was a visionary because all the stuff that followed, including CNN."

Rasmussen's time at ESPN was short-lived. He left the network in October 1980 and became a sports and media consultant. Throughout his life, he had his hand in many start-up ventures in sports, often involving media, but his immense contribution to the television landscape with ESPN followed him.

In 1994, Rasmussen made Sports Illustrated's "Forty for the Ages," a list of sports figures who significantly altered and elevated the world of sports in the second half of the 20th century. USA TODAY called him "The Father of Sports Television."

Back in Greencastle, Indiana, Rasmussen was so much more than that.

"Bill was a tremendous representative of DePauw," said Rasmussen's longtime friend Bill Wagner, assistant athletics director for communications. "His entrepreneurial spirit and vision made the world better. His positive attitude was unmatched and lifted everyone around him. I will miss his friendship. We lost a true legend and pioneer."

'Bill had a brilliant mind and he used it for good'

After leaving DePauw, Rasmussen never forgot the university. He came back often to help, to speak, to talk to students, to champion the school, and that included his beloved Monon Bell football game between DePauw and Wabash.

In 1977, with Rasmussen's encouragement, ABC aired the Monon Bell as a regional broadcast. In 1979, the same year ESPN launched, CBS' Charles Kuralt did a feature on the game during his "Sunday Morning" show.

It never failed. If DePauw needed Rasmussen, he was there, Owen says.

In 2017, Rasmussen returned to the university for a week on campus that included interacting with students, working with the business school, attending the Monon Bell game and sitting down with Owen for the Timothy And Sharon Ubben Lecture Series "Finding Your Passion, Realizing Your Dream."

"And he did not charge a dime," Owen said. "If I had a student reach out and say, 'How would I get ahold of Bill Rasmussen?' I'd say, 'I'll reach out for you.' And I'd call Bill and he'd go, 'Oh yeah, give them my number.'

"He's a very modest guy. He was not at all bashful. Bill was a salesman, but he was very modest."

Two years after his DePauw visit, Rasmussen revealed he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2019. Rasmussen became an ambassador through the American Parkinson Disease Association and The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

"When he went public with his Parkinson's diagnosis, he was very deliberate about it, because he was determined not to make it about him, but to help people," Owen said. "And that's a real tribute to him, because he was 86 years old. He could have just quietly gone into the night."

Instead, Rasmussen made it his mission to try to create change for others, continuing to make public appearances to bring awareness to the disease.

"I think of all the people I've known in my life, Bill might have been the greatest impact player," Owen says. "He had a brilliant mind and he used it for good."

Rasmussen is survived by two sons, Scott (Laura), Glenn, and his daughter, Lynn Van Hollebeke, and her husband Louie, seven grandchildren, one great grandson and one great granddaughter. He is preceded in death by his wife Lois of 56 years (2011) and his brothers Robert and Donald Rasmussen, sister Vivien and grandson Justin Van Hollebeke.

Follow IndyStar sports reporter Dana Hunsinger on X: @danahunsinger33. Email: dbenbow@indystar.com

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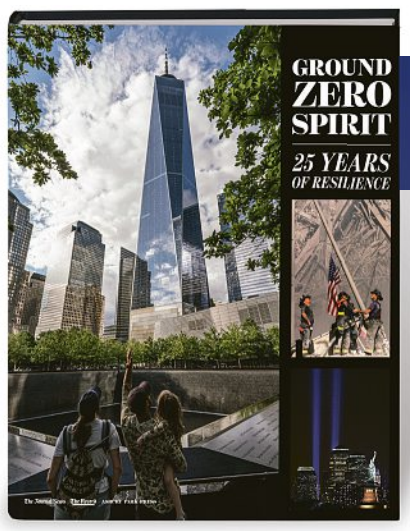

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NFL

Which players might be on chopping block?

Michael Middlehurst-Schwartz
USA TODAY

A dreaded day on the NFL calendar looms in the near future.

As training camps wind down and the preseason peters out, each team will face the unenviable task of making a significant reduction in force by setting its 53-man roster on Aug. 30 for the start of the upcoming season. That nearly 50% reduction in manpower hardly closes the door on further moves, with franchises continuing to reshuffle in the aftermath while also setting their practice squads. But there's an undeniable sense of finality ahead for many of those who will be sent packing, with a large portion unlikely to make it back to this level.

A good chunk of teams' cuts already seem clear, with only so many positional competitions within any given roster still ongoing. Yet some familiar figures could still be looking for a new setting in short order.

With 10 days remaining until the cutdown day deadline, here are some of the most notable names from around the league who could be on the chopping block:

Steelers running back Kaleb Johnson participates in organized team activities in May at the UPMC Rooney Sports Complex. CHARLES LECLAIRE/IMAGN IMAGES

Titans QB Will Levis

Things have been rather rough for Tennessee's former starting quarterback since his December 2024 benching. Not only did the Titans select Cam Ward with the No. 1 pick in the ensuing draft, but the strong-armed signal-caller missed all of the 2025 campaign after opting to undergo shoulder surgery.

Nevertheless, his confidence he is a starting-caliber passer hasn't wavered. To reclaim that status, however, his exit is likely a necessity – and it could be coming sooner rather than later.

With Tennessee having signed one of the more capable backups on the market in Mitchell Trubisky, Levis has been reduced to a clear No. 3 option. With development a priority throughout the roster, carrying three quarterbacks seems like a luxury that Tennessee can't afford.

The one wrinkle could be Trubisky's right biceps injury, which he suffered on Aug. 17. Though any long-term issue could prompt some reconsideration of the contingency plan behind center, first-year coach Robert Saleh expressed optimism that the problem would be short-lived.

Steelers RB Kaleb Johnson

In addressing the battle unfolding behind lead ballcarriers Jaylen Warren and Rico Dowdle, Steelers coach Mike McCarthy made clear his priorities.

"It's important for our players to be able to play all four downs," McCarthy said on Aug. 16, one day after Pittsburgh's first exhibition matchup against the Packers. "I think everyone's excited about draft picks and this and that, but … you have to be able to play on offense (or) defense and special teams. I don't like to keep a guy who's just on special teams or just on offense unless his offense or level (warrant it)."

McCarthy was partially giving a shoutout to running back Travis Homer, a special teams standout who's worked his way to additional consideration for reps in the backfield. But he also might have been foreshadowing a split with Johnson, the 2025 third-round pick who's been unable to find his footing with the previous coaching staff or the new one.

With Homer getting the nod to start the first preseason game, Johnson logged just two carries for 3 yards. That workload didn't seem like it reflected the coaching staff's intentions to keep the second-year back safe. Instead, Johnson's dwindling role over the course of the offseason could culminate with the team sending him packing as it prioritizes more versatile options further down the roster.

Giants WR Odell Beckham Jr.

Based on the early returns from his first on-field work in more than a year, the two-time Pro Bowl receiver's return to the Giants looks on track. Despite notching just two catches for 6 yards, Beckham consistently broke free of coverage both underneath and downfield.

"I'm impressed by the way he looks right now," general manager Joe Schoen said during the broadcast.

That re-emergent skill set should be sufficient to score Beckham a spot in a shaky receiving corps. John Harbaugh, however, was a bit cryptic in addressing the wideout's future with the franchise.

"I love Odell. I do. What he's fighting for – I don't know how it's going to turn out," Harbaugh said in a news conference. "It's gonna turn out the way it turns out based on what happens. But to see his fight, his determination, his humility … just as a friend, that makes me really proud of him."

Regardless of Beckham's resolution, the Giants' roster cull will likely include the departure of a notable receiver. Jalin Hyatt, a former third-round pick who continues to be hampered by leg and ankle ailments, might very well be running out of time after seeing his production wane over three years.

Browns WR Cedric Tillman

The youth movement is already underway in the Browns' receiving corps, with top picks KC Concepcion and Denzel Boston figuring to vacuum up plenty of targets alongside Jerry Jeudy. That transition could bump out Tillman, who started 10 games last season but might be blocked off from meaningful reps this fall.

A third-round pick in 2023, Tillman has enjoyed a couple of relatively fruitful multi-week stretches for Cleveland despite the team's severe limitations behind center. But with Boston in tow, the Browns have their big-bodied perimeter target to secure contested catches.

A nonfactor on special teams, Tillman might need to look elsewhere to jump-start his career.

Cowboys WR Jonathan Mingo

Camden Brown's ascension from an undrafted rookie out of Georgia Southern to training camp darling has been a fun development for almost everyone in the Cowboys orbit – except for Mingo.

Brown's buzz is approaching a full crescendo after his two-touchdown performance against the Seahawks. Though Cowboys coach Brian Schottenheimer cautioned that Brown needs to maintain his trajectory, he added, "The game's not too big for him."

The same can't be said for Mingo through three years in the NFL. Despite giving up a fourth-round pick to acquire the former second-round selection in November 2024, the Cowboys have netted a measly six catches for 71 yards in 14 career games for the wideout.

Jerry Jones initially launched a staunch defense of his highly criticized trade, but it might be time to cut bait. Brown has been lauded by each of Dallas' quarterbacks, and his momentum for the fifth receiver slot might be too much for Mingo to overcome.

Bengals DT McKinnley Jackson

When the Bengals selected Jackson in the third round of the 2024 draft, they envisioned a run-stuffing successor to DJ Reader in the middle of their defense. After limited contributions as a rookie, however, the Texas A&M product seemed to fall out of favor last season with first-year defensive coordinator Al Golden. Jackson's midseason trade request went unfulfilled, and he played in just nine games and 25% of the defensive snaps for a unit that had widespread problems stopping opposing ground games.

Now, he looks like an afterthought on a reloaded front.

With Dexter Lawrence and Jonathan Allen coming aboard to bump incumbent starters B.J. Hill and T.J. Slaton Jr. to the second team, Cincinnati has extensive depth at what used to be the team's most underinvested position. Kris Jenkins Jr., taken a round ahead of Jackson in 2024, could hold the edge for a final roster spot, while seventh-round rookie Landon Robinson is making a push for consideration. Jackson, meanwhile, has been hobbled by an ankle injury suffered in the preseason opener.

Buccaneers OLB Chris Braswell

Tampa Bay's various efforts to supercharge its pass rush in recent years have largely fallen short. It's little wonder, then, that general manager Jason Licht pounced on the opportunity to become more forceful up front by taking Rueben Bain Jr. with the No. 15 overall pick in April.

But as the Buccaneers embrace one brawny brawler off the edge, it could be preparing to close the door on another.

Braswell, a second-round pick in 2024, looks extraneous to the current crop of outside linebackers. Bain and YaYa Diaby are slated to hold down the lead roles. Al-Quaddin Muhammad was signed in April to add depth alongside Anthony Nelson, who is set to enter his eighth year with the organization. Meanwhile, 2025 fourth-rounder David Walker appears to be on the upswing in his recovery from a torn anterior cruciate ligament last summer, and undrafted rookie Jack Pyburn flashed promise with two sacks in the first preseason tilt.

That doesn't leave much space for Braswell, who's only notched 2 ½ sacks in two years, to contribute in any meaningful way. Still in need of significant development as a pass rusher, the Alabama product – as well as the team – might be best off if he tries to polish his game elsewhere.

Chargers LB Junior Colson

As much as it might pain Jim Harbaugh to let go of a fellow Michigan man, that's the way things could be trending for Colson, a 2024 third-round pick.

After a rocky rookie season that included an appendectomy in training camp and landing on injured reserve due to his hamstring, Colson missed all of the 2025 campaign after having shoulder surgery last August.

Now he's stuck behind more reliable options in Daiyan Henley, Denzel Perryman and Troy Dye, while Del'Shawn Phillips and Marlowe Max build solid cases to be more than special teams contributors.

With Wax making a strong impression in camp and the first preseason game, Colson might have work to do if he's to secure a spot. There's time left for a late surge, and the Chargers might be reticent to give up on a player who has not been able to fully demonstrate his ability. But the roster setup might not be in his favor.

Eagles CB Kelee Ringo

The 6-foot-2, 207-pound Georgia product sporadically serves up reminders of his considerable upside, as he did in the preseason opener by hauling in an end-zone interception. But the story of Ringo's career in coverage as a pro has been his inconsistency. That trend has continued to hold this summer, with his takeaway coming just one play after he was flagged for pass interference.

"You always want to think about being able to move on and play the next play," Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said after the game. "That's mental toughness, having the same attitude, effort, energy and enthusiasm, and so that was good. That was positive to see Kelee come back after that play and make a really nice interception."

But Sirianni, defensive coordinator Vic Fangio and general manager Howie Roseman might not be able to move on so easily from last year's memories of Ringo's inability to seize a starting spot. Next to Mac McWilliams and Jonathan Jones, he might not even size up favorably as a backup.

Ringo's saving grace might be his value as a gunner. Yet special teams contributions alone might not be sufficient to keep him on the roster.

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Sourcewell, a State of Minnesota local government unit and service cooperative, is requesting proposals for Portable Construction Equipment with Related Accessories and Attachments to result in a procurement solution for use by its Participating Entities.

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A full copy of the Request for Proposals can be found on the Sourcewell Procurement Portal https://proportal.sourcewell-mn.gov.

Only proposals submitted through the Sourcewell Procurement Portal will be considered.

Proposals are due no later than October 8, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. Central Time, and late proposals will not be considered.

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FOR THE RECORD

All times ET

MLB

AMERICAN LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	75	50	.600	–
N.Y. Yankees	70	55	.560	5
Boston	68	58	.540	7½
Toronto	62	65	.488	14
Baltimore	61	65	.484	14½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chi. White Sox	65	60	.520	–
Minnesota	62	65	.488	4
Cleveland	61	65	.484	4½
Detroit	61	65	.484	4½
Kansas City	53	74	.417	13

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	63	63	.500	–
Texas	62	64	.492	1
Seattle	59	67	.468	4
L.A. Angels	50	76	.397	13
Athletics	49	77	.389	14

NATIONAL LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	74	52	.587	–
Philadelphia	69	58	.543	5½
Miami	64	63	.504	10½
Washington	60	67	.472	14½
N.Y. Mets	57	70	.449	17½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	78	48	.619	–
Chicago Cubs	74	53	.583	4½
St. Louis	65	62	.512	13½
Pittsburgh	62	66	.484	17
Cincinnati	60	66	.476	18

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	76	51	.598	–
San Diego	68	59	.535	8
Arizona	66	61	.520	10
San Francisco	51	74	.408	24
Colorado	50	76	.397	25½

Tuesday's Scores
N.Y. Yankees 3, Baltimore 1
St. Louis 3, Cincinnati 0
Toronto 10, Tampa Bay 5
Cleveland 8, San Francisco 1
Philadelphia 6, Miami 4
Pittsburgh 4, Detroit 1
Boston 9, Arizona 4
San Diego 5, N.Y. Mets 2
Minnesota 4, Atlanta 1
Kansas City 4, Athletics 3
Milwaukee 22, Seattle 0
Texas 5, Washington 0
Chicago Cubs 4, Chi. White Sox 3
L.A. Angels 3, Houston 1
L.A. Dodgers 7, Colorado 6

Wednesday's Games
Detroit at Pittsburgh
San Diego at N.Y. Mets
Atlanta at Minnesota
Chi. White Sox at Chicago Cubs
Arizona at Boston
Miami at Philadelphia
N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore
St. Louis at Cincinnati
Toronto at Tampa Bay
San Francisco at Cleveland
Athletics at Kansas City
Seattle at Milwaukee
Washington at Texas
L.A. Angels at Houston
L.A. Dodgers at Colorado

Thursday's Games
St. Louis at Cincinnati, 12:40 p.m.
Toronto at Tampa Bay, 1:10 p.m.
San Francisco at Cleveland, 1:10 p.m.
Athletics at Kansas City, 2:10 p.m.
Seattle at Milwaukee, 2:10 p.m.
Atlanta at Chi. White Sox, 2:10 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore, 6:35 p.m.
Washington at Texas, 8:05 p.m.
L.A. Angels at Houston, 8:10 p.m.

Friday's Games
Atlanta at Milwaukee, 4:10 p.m.
St. Louis at Philadelphia, 6:40 p.m.
Toronto at N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
San Francisco at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
Washington at Miami, 7:10 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Baltimore, 7:15 p.m.
N.Y. Mets at Chi. White Sox, 7:40 p.m.
Athletics at Houston, 8:10 p.m.
Detroit at Kansas City, 8:10 p.m.
L.A. Angels at Texas, 8:15 p.m.
Cleveland at Colorado, 8:40 p.m.
Cincinnati at Arizona, 9:40 p.m.
Minnesota at San Diego, 9:40 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at Seattle, 10:10 p.m.
Pittsburgh at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

CFL

EAST DIVISION

	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
Montreal	8	1	.889	321	247
Toronto	4	5	.444	265	291
Hamilton	4	6	.400	237	280
Ottawa	0	9	.000	207	322

WEST DIVISION

	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
Edmonton	7	3	.700	259	248
Saskatchewan	6	3	.666	274	215
Winnipeg	5	4	.555	204	243
BC	4	5	.444	214	225
Calgary	4	6	.400	352	297

Thursday's Game
Ottawa vs. Montreal, 7:30 p.m.
Friday's Game
Winnipeg vs. Edmonton, 9:30 p.m.
Saturday's Game
Hamilton vs. Toronto, 7 p.m.
Sunday's Game
Saskatchewan vs. BC, 7 p.m.

NFL

Preseason Week 2
Thursday's Games
Las Vegas at Houston, 8 p.m.
San Francisco at L.A. Chargers, 10 p.m.
Friday's Games
N.Y. Jets at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Carolina at Jacksonville, 7:30 p.m.
Green Bay at Denver, 9 p.m.
Saturday's Games
Washington at Detroit, noon
Buffalo at Cleveland, 1 p.m.
Baltimore at Minnesota, 1 p.m.
Atlanta at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.
N.Y. Giants at Miami, 4 p.m.
New Orleans at L.A. Rams, 4 p.m.
Philadelphia at New England, 7 p.m.
Chicago at Cincinnati, 7 p.m.
Kansas City at Tampa Bay, 7:30 p.m.
Dallas at Arizona, 10 p.m.
Sunday's Game
Seattle at Tennessee, 8 p.m.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

AFCA Division II Coaches Poll

Rk	School (1sts)	2025 record	Pts.	2025 rank
1	Ferris St. (31)	16-0	775	1
2	Harding	15-1	738	2
3	Kutztown	14-1	684	3
4	Pittsburg St.	10-3	647	6
5	Minnesota St.	10-4	587	8
6	Colorado St.-Pueblo	10-2	581	11
7	Central Washington	10-2	478	13
8	Northwest Missouri St.	9-3	470	17
9t.	Grand Valley St.	7-3	451	NR
9t.	UIndy	11-2	451	10
11	Western Colorado	10-3	379	12
12	Minnesota-Duluth	10-2	372	16
13	Ashland	10-3	328	15
14	Virginia Union	9-3	318	21
15	Newberry	12-2	276	4
16	Findlay	10-2	250	19
17	Frostburg St.	11-3	228	14
18	UT Permian Basin	11-3	197	5
19	Wingate	9-3	183	NR
20	Augustana (SD)	9-2	181	25
21	Albany St.	12-2	172	7
22	Western Oregon	8-3	165	NR
23	Johnson C. Smith	10-2	159	18
24	Ouachita Baptist	7-4	146	NR
25	Indiana (PA)	7-4	97	NR

Others receiving votes: Valdosta St., 86; Chadron St., 83; Central Oklahoma, 64; North Greenville, 61; Slippery Rock, 56; California (PA), 53; Northwood, 50; Delta St., 33; Michigan Tech, 31; Assumption, 29; Bentley, 27; Benedict, 25; Lenoir-Rhyne, 21; Colorado Mines, 18; Northeastern St., 16; Southern Arkansas, 14; Charleston, 13; Fort Hays St., 13; Truman St., 13; West Texas A&M, 10; UNC Pembroke, 8; Central Missouri, 7; Edward Waters, 7; Henderson St., 6; Angelo St., 4; East Stroudsburg, 4; Nebraska-Kearney, 4; Upper Iowa, 3; Davenport, 2; Carson-Newman, 1.

SOCCER

English Premier League
Friday's Game
Arsenal vs. Coventry City, 3 p.m.
Saturday's Games
Hull City vs. Manchester United, 7:30 a.m.
Everton vs. Crystal Palace, 10 a.m.
Ipswich Town vs. Sunderland, 10 a.m.
Nottingham Forest vs. Leeds United, 10 a.m.
Brentford vs. Tottenham, 12:30 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Brighton & Hove Albion vs. Aston Villa, 9 a.m.
Manchester City vs. Bournemouth, 9 a.m.
Newcastle United vs. Liverpool, 11:30 a.m.
Monday's Game
Fulham vs. Chelsea, 3 p.m.

NWSL

	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Gotham	13	3	4	43	26	13
Washington	11	5	4	37	30	18
Utah	11	6	3	36	35	23
Portland	10	6	4	34	34	29
San Diego	10	7	3	33	25	21
North Carolina	9	7	3	30	34	29
Kansas City	9	8	3	30	31	28
Seattle	8	7	3	27	23	23
Angel City	7	7	4	25	27	20
Denver	6	7	6	24	25	25
Houston	6	8	5	23	23	28
Orlando	7	11	2	23	24	31
Louisville	6	11	2	20	28	36
Boston	5	10	5	20	23	32
Bay	5	10	4	19	20	27
Chicago	4	14	1	13	9	34

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.
Wednesday's Games
Seattle at Louisville, 6:30 p.m.
Chicago at Houston, 8 p.m.
Friday's Game
Utah at San Diego, 10 p.m.
Saturday's Games
Seattle at Kansas City, 6:30 p.m.
Boston at North Carolina, 7:30 p.m.
Denver at Portland, 8:45 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Louisville at Chicago, 2 p.m.
Orlando at Washington, 4 p.m.
Houston at Bay, 6 p.m.
Gotham at Angel City, 8 p.m.

MLS
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	13	2	4	43	39	15
Inter Miami CF	11	3	5	38	46	36
Chicago	10	6	2	32	34	24
New England	9	7	3	30	29	25
Charlotte FC	8	7	4	28	32	28
Cincinnati	7	6	6	27	46	45
NY City FC	7	7	5	26	33	27
NY Red Bulls	7	8	4	25	30	41
D.C. United	5	5	9	24	27	30
Orlando City	6	10	3	21	31	48
Columbus	5	9	5	20	27	31
Toronto FC	4	7	8	20	26	33
Philadelphia	5	10	4	19	28	35
CF Montreal	4	10	5	17	25	36
Atlanta	4	12	3	15	21	34

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Houston	11	6	2	35	28	24
Vancouver	10	3	4	34	38	17
Los Angeles FC	10	6	4	34	35	20
San Jose	10	6	3	33	38	27
FC Dallas	8	5	6	30	34	26
Saint Louis	8	6	5	29	27	25
Real Salt Lake	8	6	4	28	30	26
Colorado	8	10	1	25	29	25
Minnesota	6	6	7	25	21	26
Portland	7	9	3	24	34	35
Seattle	7	7	3	24	20	22
San Diego FC	6	7	6	24	33	29
LA Galaxy	5	8	7	22	24	30
Austin FC	4	10	5	17	23	38
Sporting KC	4	13	2	14	18	48

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.
Wednesday's Games
Charlotte FC at Toronto FC
New England at D.C. United
Inter Miami CF at Philadelphia
NY City FC at Cincinnati
Nashville at NY Red Bulls
Chicago at Orlando City
CF Montreal at Columbus
Saint Louis at Sporting KC
Atlanta at Minnesota
Austin FC at Seattle
Los Angeles FC at Colorado
FC Dallas at Real Salt Lake
San Diego FC at Portland
San Jose at LA Galaxy
Houston at Vancouver
Saturday's Games
Seattle at Cincinnati, 7:30 p.m.
LA Galaxy at CF Montreal, 7:30 p.m.
Real Salt Lake at Orlando City, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto FC at Inter Miami CF, 7:30 p.m.
D.C. United at Charlotte FC, 7:30 p.m.
Chicago at NY Red Bulls, 7:30 p.m.
Houston at Saint Louis, 8:30 p.m.
Philadelphia at Austin FC, 8:30 p.m.
Columbus at Nashville, 8:30 p.m.
FC Dallas at Vancouver, 9:30 p.m.
Colorado at San Diego FC, 10:30 p.m.
Portland at Los Angeles FC, 10:30 p.m.
Minnesota at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.
Sunday's Games
NY City FC at New England, 4:30 p.m.
Sporting KC at Atlanta, 7 p.m.

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	24	12	.667	–
Atlanta	22	13	.629	1½
N.Y. Liberty	22	15	.595	2½
Washington	20	14	.588	3
Chicago	14	22	.389	10
Toronto	10	24	.294	13
Connecticut	9	25	.265	14

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	29	7	.806	–
Golden State	25	9	.735	3
Las Vegas	24	13	.649	5½
Dallas	20	16	.556	9
Portland	15	20	.429	13½
Phoenix	13	23	.361	16
L.A. Sparks	12	23	.343	16½
Seattle	7	30	.189	22½

Tuesday's Scores
Connecticut 85, L.A. Sparks 77
Indiana 101, Toronto 95
Chicago 93, N.Y. Liberty 86
Atlanta 97, Las Vegas 82
Wednesday's Games
Toronto at Washington
Minnesota at Golden State
Thursday's Games
Indiana vs Dallas at Dallas, 8 p.m.
Connecticut at Las Vegas, 10 p.m.
Atlanta at L.A. Sparks, 10 p.m.
Friday's Games
Minnesota at Washington, 7:30 p.m.
Golden State at Chicago, 7:30 p.m.
Portland at Toronto, 10 p.m.
Saturday's Games
Indiana at N.Y. Liberty, 7 p.m.
Connecticut at L.A. Sparks, 9 p.m.
Atlanta at Phoenix, 10 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Seattle at Dallas, 4 p.m.
Indiana at Chicago, 7 p.m.
Washington at Portland, 7 p.m.
Las Vegas at Toronto, 7 p.m.

DEALS

FOOTBALL
National Football League
CAROLINA PANTHERS – G Joshua Gray signed to Minnesota Vikings.
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS – DE Anthony Dunn Jr. cut. LB Cam Jones signed.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS – DT Eric Johnson II cut. G Joshua Gray signed.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS – RB D'Ernest Johnson signed to Tennessee Titans.
NEW YORK GIANTS – LB Cam Jones signed to Kansas City Chiefs. G Daniel Faalele traded to Jacksonville Jaguars for 2027 draft pick.
NEW YORK JETS – WR DT Sheffield cut. WR Junior Bergen signed.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS – WR Junior Bergen signed to New York Jets.
TENNESSEE TITANS – RB Dominic Richardson cut. RB D'Ernest Johnson signed.

AUTO RACING

F1 Schedule and winners
March 8 – Australian Grand Prix, Melbourne, Australia (George Russell)
March 15 – Chinese Grand Prix, Shanghai, China PR (Kimi Antonelli)
March 29 – Japanese Grand Prix, Suzuka, Japan (Kimi Antonelli)
April 19 – Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Canceled)
May 3 – Miami Grand Prix (Kimi Antonelli)
May 24 – Grand Prix du Canada, Montréal, Canada (Kimi Antonelli)
June 7 – Grand Prix De Monaco, Monte Carlo, Monaco (Kimi Antonelli)
June 14 – Gran Premio de Barcelona-Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain (Lewis Hamilton)
June 28 – Austrian Grand Prix, Spielberg, Austria (George Russell)
July 5 – British Grand Prix, Northhamptonshire, Great Britain (Charles Leclerc)
July 19 – Belgian Grand Prix, Francorchamps, Belgium (Kimi Antonelli)
July 26 – Hungarian Grand Prix, Mogyorod, Hungary (Lando Norris)
Aug. 23 – Dutch Grand Prix, Zandvoort
Sept. 6 – Italian Grand Prix, Monza, Italy
Sept. 13 – Gran Premio de España, Madrid
Sept. 26 – Azerbaijan Grand Prix, Baku City Circuit, Azerbaijan

PRO GOLF TOUR PREVIEWS

LIV Golf Indianapolis

Course: The Club at Chatham Hills (Par 70; 7,273 yards) in Indianapolis.

Purse: Individual: $10.1 million (winner: $2.02M); Team: $30M (winners: $8.4M).

TV: Aug. 20: 1-6 p.m. ET (Fox 1); Aug. 21: Noon-2 p.m. ET (Fox 1) and 2-5 p.m. (Fox); Aug. 22: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. (Fox); Aug. 23: 2-7 p.m. ET (Fox).

Defending champions: Individual: Sebastian Munoz; Team: Torque GC; season leaders: Individual: Jon Rahm; Team: 4Aces GC. … This will serve as the season-ending event. … Jon Rahm has clinched the individual championship at $6 million bonus, but the two other bonus-paying positions remain at stake ($3 million for second, $1 million for third). … The team champions will be determined through the all-scores-count format. All 13 teams are eligible to win the title.

LPGA CPKC: Women's Open

Course: Royal Mayfair Golf Club (Par 70; 6,452 yards) in Edmonton.

Purse: $2.75M (winner: $412,500)

TV/streaming: Aug. 20-21: 6-7 p.m. ET (GolfChannel.com) and 7-9 p.m. ET (Golf Channel); Aug. 22: 6-7 p.m. (NBCSN) and 7:30-9 p.m. (Golf Channel); Aug. 23: 6-7 p.m. (NBCSN) and 7-9 p.m. (Golf Channel).

Defending champion: Brooke Henderson; Race to CME Globe leader: Nelly Korda. … The event dates back to 2001 and was won last year for the second time by Henderson, who is one of 15 Canadians in this week's field. Lydia Ko is the only player to win the event three times.

PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS: Rogers Charity Classic

Course: Canyon Meadows Golf & Country Club (Par 70; 7,068 Yards) in Calgary.

TV: Aug. 21: 10 p.m.-midnight ET; Aug. 22-23: 5-7 p.m. ET (Golf Channel).

Defending champion: Richard Green; Charles Schwab Cup leader: Stewart Cink. … This is the 14th edition of the tour's only stop in Canada. … Cink and rookie Zach Johnson have combined to win nine of the first 17 events of the 2026 season, including three of the five majors. Johnson is in the field, while Cink takes the week off.

DP WORLD TOUR: Nexo Championship

Course: Trump International Golf Links (Par 72; 7,314 Yards) in Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

TV: Aug. 20-22: 7:30 a.m.-noon ET; Aug. 23: 6:30-11:30 a.m. (Golf Channel).

– Field Level Media

WEATHER

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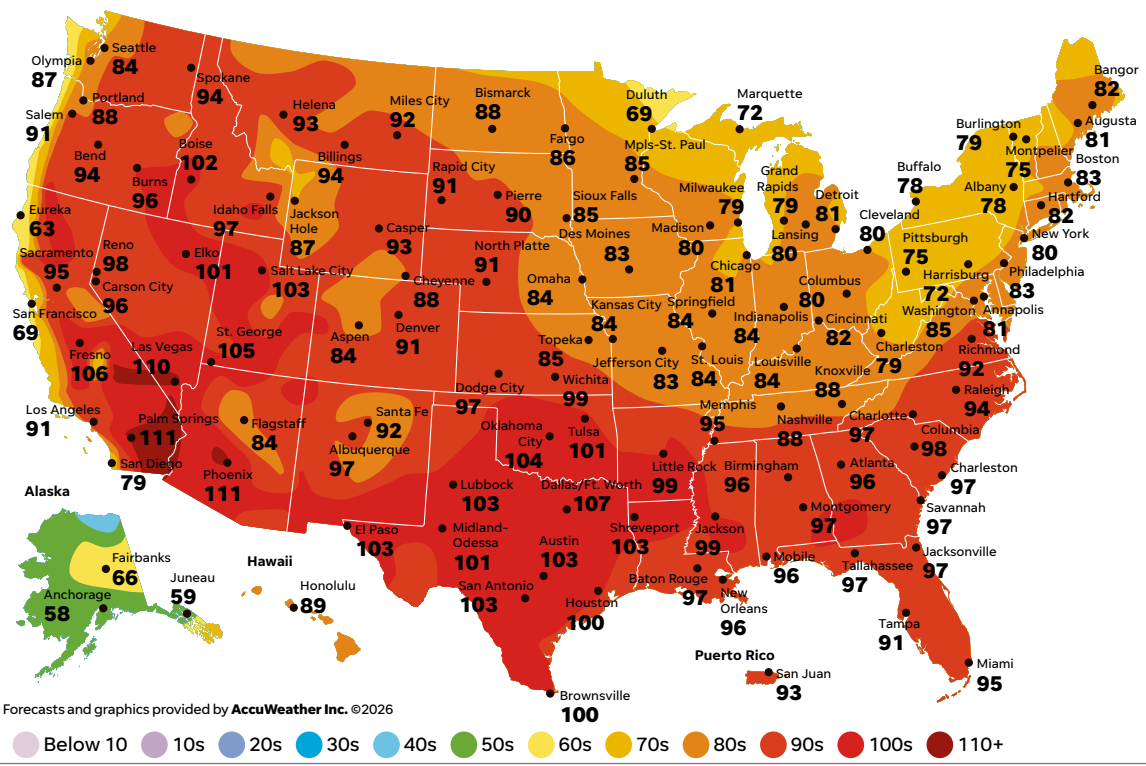
TODAY'S FORECAST

A pleasant day is in store from the southern **Great Lakes** through interior **New England** today. South of there, thunderstorms will occur from southern **New England** through the **Ohio Valley** and into parts of the **Southeast** and the **mid-Atlantic**. Storms from northern **Mississippi** and **Alabama** through parts of the **mid-Atlantic** can bring flash flooding and damaging winds.

Hot and humid conditions will continue across much of the **Plains**, with thunderstorm development also occurring from northeastern **Nebraska** through northern **Minnesota** and the Upper Peninsula of **Michigan**.

While a vast majority of the **Rockies** and the **West** will remain hot and dry, afternoon thunderstorms can dot parts of **New Mexico**, **Arizona**, eastern **Utah** and central **Colorado**.

TODAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



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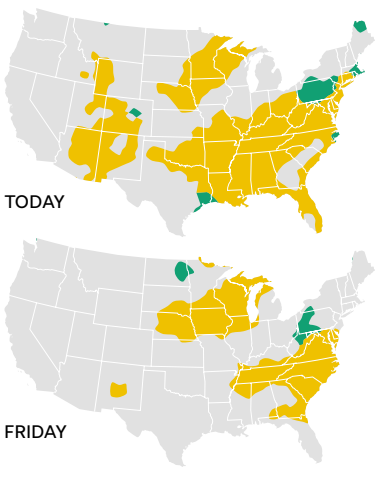
PRECIPITATION FORECAST



EXTREMES

Note: For contiguous 48 states through Tuesday

HOTTEST: 118° Death Valley, Calif.
COLDEST: 35° Angel Fire, N.M.

TOP TRAVEL CITIES Air quality index (AQI)

ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	CHARLOTTE	CHICAGO	DALLAS/FT. WORTH	DENVER	DETROIT	HONOLULU	HOUSTON	LAS VEGAS	LOS ANGELES
THU Stray t-storm 96/76	THU T-storms 81/67	THU A P.M. shower 83/67	THU Stray t-storm 97/74	THU Mostly sunny 81/63	THU Hot 107/83	THU Very warm 91/66	THU Mostly sunny 81/60	THU Some sun 89/75	THU Hot 100/80	THU Hot 110/89	THU Very warm 91/71
FRI Stray t-storm 93/73	FRI T-storms 81/68	FRI Partly sunny 77/63	FRI Heavy t-storm 91/70	FRI Heavy t-storm 79/66	FRI Hot 105/82	FRI Stray t-shower 95/66	FRI Partly sunny 82/62	FRI Showers around 89/77	FRI Hot 100/80	FRI Stray t-storm 105/86	FRI Mostly sunny 90/70
SAT Stray t-storm 93/72	SAT Rain 81/67	SAT Shower 73/65	SAT T-storm 87/69	SAT Stray t-storm 80/61	SAT Hot 105/83	SAT Very warm 93/66	SAT T-storms 79/58	SAT Showers around 90/78	SAT Stray t-storm 102/78	SAT Mostly sunny 107/86	SAT Sunny 89/70
AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate

MIAMI	MPLS-ST. PAUL	NEW ORLEANS	NEW YORK	ORLANDO	PHILADELPHIA	PHOENIX	SALT LAKE CITY	SAN DIEGO	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	WASHINGTON
THU Stray t-storm 95/80	THU Stray t-storm 85/64	THU Stray t-storm 96/79	THU T-storms 80/66	THU A P.M. t-storm 92/76	THU T-storms 83/67	THU Stray t-storm 111/90	THU Hot 103/78	THU Humid 79/70	THU Breezy 69/58	THU Mostly sunny 84/59	THU T-storms 85/70
FRI Stray t-storm 94/80	FRI A P.M. t-storm 82/63	FRI Stray t-storm 96/77	FRI Partly sunny 80/68	FRI A P.M. t-storm 94/77	FRI Incr. clouds 82/68	FRI Hot 112/90	FRI Hot 102/73	FRI Humid 79/70	FRI Breezy 69/57	FRI Partly sunny 81/59	FRI T-storms 83/72
SAT Stray t-storm 92/79	SAT Sunny 81/59	SAT Stray t-storm 95/78	SAT A few showers 75/68	SAT Stray t-storm 93/76	SAT A few showers 79/70	SAT Hot 113/90	SAT Stray t-storm 93/71	SAT Humid 80/69	SAT Breezy 73/58	SAT Showers around 71/57	SAT Rain 83/70
AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate

c Cloudy **f** Fog **i** Ice **r** Rain **sf** Snowflurries **sn** Snow **w** Windy **dr** Drizzle **h** Haze **pc** Partly cloudy **s** Sunny **sh** Showers **t** Thunderstorms

U.S. CITIES

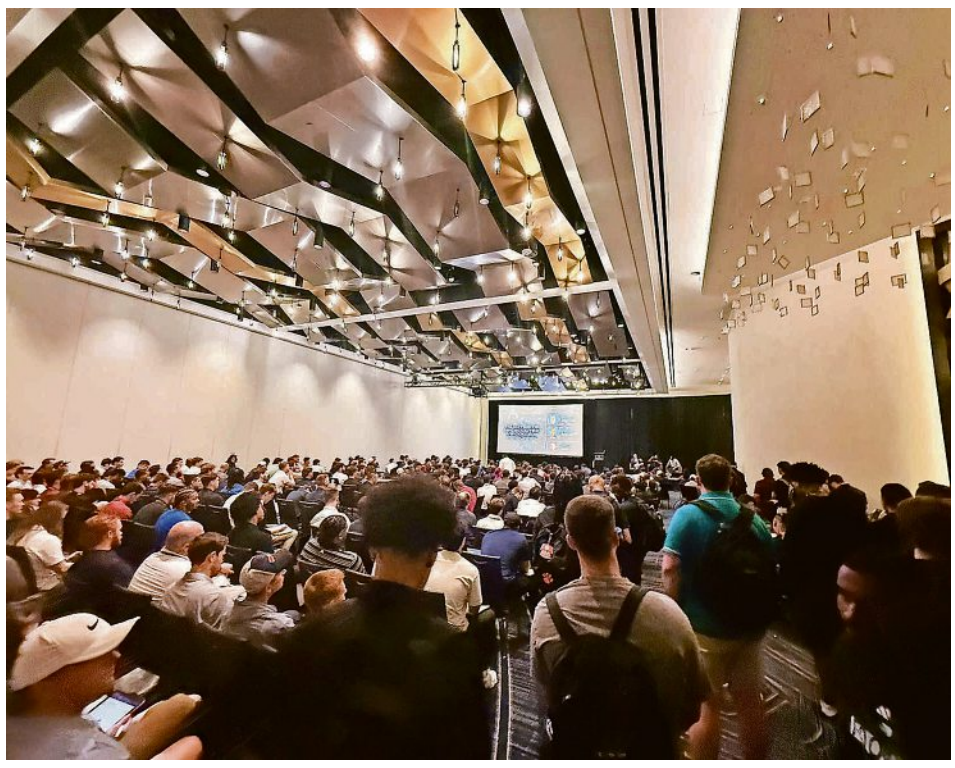
	TODAY	FRI
Akron, Ohio	78/59t	80/61t
Albany, N.Y.	78/55pc	82/59s
Albuquerque	97/70pc	95/70t
Allentown, Pa.	76/60r	80/64pc
Amarillo, Texas	97/69c	101/73pc
Anaheim, Calif.	90/69s	91/70pc
Anchorage, Alaska	58/53sh	63/54sh
Aspen, Colo.	84/53t	84/56t
Atlantic City, N.J.	79/69t	80/72pc
Augusta, Ga.	99/73pc	95/72t
Austin, Texas	103/78s	105/77s
Bakersfield, Calif.	106/76pc	104/74s
Baton Rouge, La.	97/78t	96/76t
Billings, Mont.	94/64s	91/63pc
Birmingham, Ala.	96/75t	91/73t
Bismarck, N.D.	88/54pc	87/54s
Boise, Idaho	102/70pc	103/73pc
Buffalo, N.Y.	78/57s	82/63s
Burlington, Vt.	79/56pc	80/57pc
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	81/64pc	83/62t
Charleston, S.C.	97/78t	96/76t
Charleston, W.Va.	79/67t	81/63t
Cheyenne, Wyo.	88/59pc	91/60s
Cincinnati	82/66t	83/64pc
Cleveland	80/60c	82/61sh
Colorado Springs	90/62t	90/65pc
Columbia, S.C.	98/75pc	94/72t
Columbus, Ohio	80/63t	84/64s
Corpus Christi, Texas	99/79w	99/77pc
Dayton, Ohio	80/62t	83/63pc
Daytona Beach, Fla.	94/75t	94/76t
Des Moines, Iowa	83/67pc	87/67t
Duluth, Minn.	69/58t	75/56t
Durham, N.C.	94/73t	84/70t
El Paso, Texas	103/78s	102/76pc
Fairbanks, Alaska	66/52c	64/49sh
Flagstaff, Ariz.	84/53t	81/52t
Fargo, N.D.	86/57pc	85/53t
Fort Myers, Fla.	92/78pc	93/78c
Fort Smith, Ark.	105/77pc	103/75t
Fort Wayne, Ind.	81/59pc	81/60pc
Fresno, Calif.	106/72pc	105/70s
Grand Rapids, Mich.	79/58pc	78/62c
Green Bay, Wis.	80/62s	80/57t
Greensboro, N.C.	93/71t	82/68t
Greenville, S.C.	95/72t	91/70t
Harrisburg, Pa.	72/63t	80/66pc
Hartford, Conn.	82/57sh	83/60pc
Indianapolis	84/63pc	82/64s
Islip, N.Y.	82/66t	81/67s
Jackson, Miss.	99/75t	98/74t
Jacksonville, Fla.	97/76t	95/75t
Jefferson City, Mo.	83/66pc	88/67pc
Kansas City	84/66pc	88/69pc
Key West, Fla.	91/83s	91/82s
Knoxville, Tenn.	88/71t	87/69t
Laredo, Texas	108/80s	105/80s
Lexington, Ky.	81/68t	86/62t
Lincoln, Neb.	85/67pc	89/67t
Little Rock, Ark.	99/76t	100/74t
Long Beach, Calif.	87/70pc	87/70s
Louisville, Ky.	84/69t	89/66t
Lubbock, Texas	103/74pc	101/74s
Madison, Wis.	80/63s	79/59t
Manchester, N.H.	83/57pc	83/57pc
Memphis, Tenn.	95/75t	95/73t
Milwaukee	79/65s	79/64t
Mobile, Ala.	96/75t	94/72t
Modesto, Calif.	99/65pc	98/64s
Montgomery, Ala.	97/73t	94/72t
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	91/79t	90/77t
Nags Head, N.C.	88/77s	84/77t
Nashville, Tenn.	88/72t	91/69t
Newark, N.J.	76/67r	85/67pc
New Haven, Conn.	80/62t	82/65pc
Norfolk, Va.	94/75t	83/74t
Oakland, Calif.	70/59pc	69/59pc
Oklahoma City	104/74c	106/76s
Omaha, Neb.	84/68t	89/67t
Palm Springs, Calif.	111/89pc	112/87pc
Pensacola, Fla.	94/76t	94/75t
Pierre, S.D.	90/59s	90/58t
Pittsburgh	75/62r	82/63s
Portland, Maine	81/58pc	79/58pc
Portland, Ore.	88/63s	83/60pc
Providence, R.I.	85/63pc	81/62pc
Raleigh, N.C.	94/74t	86/70t
Rapid City, S.D.	91/60s	91/60s
Reno, Nev.	98/64pc	95/66pc
Richmond, Va.	92/72t	82/69t
Rochester, N.Y.	77/55s	78/57s
Sacramento, Calif.	95/60s	92/60pc
San Antonio	103/79c	103/79s
San Jose, Calif.	80/59pc	81/60pc
Santa Fe, N.M.	92/60pc	91/58t
Sarasota, Fla.	91/79t	90/80t
Savannah, Ga.	97/77t	97/74t
Scottsdale, Ariz.	108/87t	109/86pc
Shreveport, La.	103/81s	105/78t
Sioux Falls, S.D.	85/60t	88/60t
South Bend, Ind.	81/59s	79/63s
Spokane, Wash.	94/63s	96/68pc
Springfield, Mo.	90/68pc	94/69pc
Springfield, Ill.	84/60pc	83/63pc
St. Louis	84/69pc	88/70pc
St. Petersburg, Fla.	92/79t	90/79t
Syracuse, N.Y.	79/55pc	82/59s
Tallahassee, Fla.	97/77t	93/75t
Tampa, Fla.	91/80t	90/81t
Toledo, Ohio	81/57sh	82/61s
Topeka, Kan.	85/66pc	91/68s
Tucson, Ariz.	103/80t	105/80t
Tupelo, Miss.	97/73t	92/69t
Tulsa, Okla.	101/72pc	101/77s
Virginia Beach, Va.	90/76t	83/74t
Wichita, Kan.	99/70s	100/74pc
Wilmington, Del.	80/66t	82/67pc
Winston-Salem, N.C.	93/71t	85/69t
Worcester, Mass.	78/62pc	79/60pc

WORLD CITIES

	TODAY	FRI
Beijing	89/72t	90/73pc
Buenos Aires	64/44h	55/41pc
Cancun, Mexico	93/75pc	94/75s
Dubai, UAE	104/90h	106/94h
Frankfurt	79/55s	74/55sh
Hong Kong	87/80r	87/82r
Istanbul	89/71s	87/72s
Jerusalem	89/72s	91/73s
Johannesburg	80/

College football GMs reveal how it really is

John Brice
USA TODAY



A crowd overflows at the Personnel and Recruiting Symposium in Nashville. JOHN BRICE/USA TODAY

NASHVILLE – The biggest ballroom in this downtown Nashville hotel is overflowing – standing-room-only – and College Football Hall of Famer Mack Brown is holding court.

Brown – the last coach to win a national championship at Texas and North Carolina's winningest coach – is explaining why fifth place beats second.

On the talent-acquisition trail, that is.

At this moment, he's the champagne cork to the seventh annual Personnel and Recruiting Symposium – a 48-hour event spanning parts of three days. For 1,600 staffers from 160 schools it's the networking equivalent of the NCAA transfer portal they navigate and the social equivalent of the record-label parties that dot this city during Country Music's awards season.

"I've been doing this 50 years; they've been doing it (the recruiting process) six months," Brown tells the crowd. "And so many times, people in this room or assistant coaches didn't want to ask hard questions because you are afraid you'll get the wrong answer. I wanted to get an answer. I'd a lot rather be fifth than second. If you are second, you lose the next two, so I either wanted to get him or get out.

"So, I ask questions. We had at Texas once, a mother said she was from Indiana. Sally (Brown's wife) said, 'What about distance from home?' She said, 'Oh, he's not going to go far.' I said. 'Well, ma'am, we're not moving.' So, he's out. What are we wasting time for? You just asked her and she's not going to let him go. We're out. That's just facts."

Some of the sport's top firms and agencies host everyone from college football general managers to showcase-game representatives to media and rival agents. Some gatherings occupy large tables during lunch inside the city's sprawling Assembly Food Hall – large enough to have its own interior bridge linking its 30-plus dining joints.

Firms with brick-and-mortar spots in the city, such as both CAA and WIN, utilize their prominent downtown locations.

Other groups secure Nashville's top clubs and rooftop bars. Events turn the night of Monday, Aug. 3, into the morning of Tuesday, Aug. 4, and they repeat that pattern into Wednesday, Aug. 5.

The event's substance tracks at a similarly satisfying level, like a Deep South meat-and-three.

A year after touting representatives from all 32 NFL teams, 25 franchises return for the 2026 iteration.

The hallway outside the ballroom is lined with dual-sided vendor booths, spanning longer than a 100-yard kickoff return and spilling down the stairs into the registration area. Ghost Mail. Hudl. Monarch. Sportability. Tracker. Nutritional offerings and travel services.

AI in football is literally center stage when former Pittsburgh Steelers executive Karim Kassam, now vice president of sports intelligence at event-sponsor Teamworks, presents the latest developments.

There are more players than ever for these college programs to scout in this transfer portal era, but stretching finances – in some instances, reducing staff sizes – also maximize demands on personnel.

"With 5,000 players in the transfer portal, there is not enough time to do this thoroughly; NFL teams can get away with this because they only look at draft-eligible players," says the Harvard-educated Kassam, founder a decade ago of the Steelers' analytics and research approach. "They ignore FCS altogether, and for the most part, they know everyone they need to scout a full year in advance.

"I can extrapolate this trend for you. You are responsible for anyone who steps foot on a college football field anywhere in the country. The transfer portal can't be scouted the same way. You can ask your AD for a 25-person scouting department. Good luck. Or we can look to technology to find more efficient ways. It's worth thinking about what this future is going to look like."

He has suggestions.

"What if scouts spent an hour a day giving autonomous agents little scouting tasks?" Kassam asks. "Digital scouting assistants. Agents that can perform scouting tasks not as well as a seasoned scout, but some of them pretty well.

"You're not going to stop watching film. You will have to check their work. If you're a scout, if you're a recruiter, what would you do with a dozen digital assistants great at some things and faster than you can dream of? I think it's worth asking the question. And I'm painting this picture and I can see it because it's not that far away. It's grounded in what we're doing today."

Panel discussions rule the event – particularly on contract negotiations, trends and player evaluations.

General managers from Arkansas, Clemson, Florida, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Texas, Texas Tech are among panelists; moderators from agencies and search firms, with backgrounds in football, such as Sean Magee, Ed Marynowitz, Pat Suddes and Clint Stein among them.

Mini-breakout sessions implore these personnel pros to pose questions:

- "How does the front office manage the relationship between the head coach and the athletic department when their priorities diverge?"
- "How involved should the assistant coaches be in deciding what to pay players, and how is that communication with the front office managed?"
- "How do you balance the urgency of closing on a recruit or a portal target against the discipline of making sound fiscal decisions within budget?"

The University of Cincinnati holds a standing meeting every Tuesday to discuss contract developments, trends in the marketplace and what that school's administration is hearing in regards to potential rules changes, modifications or other potential legal issues.

An executive from another school, name withheld due to the sensitive nature of the discussion, sheds insight on troubleshooting approaches.

"Administrations will always find ways to say no," says the SEC executive. "You have to help them find ways they can say yes.

"So, don't just bring problems, bring solutions, come with compromises. Be ready to meet that middle ground so that you can take care of your priorities while understanding their perspective as well."

Billy High, Tennessee's top roster construction expert and former North Carolina personnel head, explains the Vols' approach in securing intra-departmental alignment.

"We talked at the beginning, really defining what the goals are in that athletic department and football program," High tells the Competing Stakeholder Interests panel. "From a budgetary standpoint, being clear early and often. The communication piece is so key.

"There are so many, especially now with revenue share, so many different entities that are involved. You have to have that regular communication."

High issues one final message about finding common ground.

"Coaches are always going to want more money, athletic departments are always going to want to pay less money," he says. "But at the end of the day, the goal or shared interest is winning."

With every college program's team in camp, and most NFL camps already two weeks old, the Aug. 5, schedule finishes before lunch.

Still, it's an overflow-crowd for the Tips for Young Evaluators session featuring NFL insight and the perspectives of top college personnel executives, Clemson's Kevin Kelly – a 20-year NFL personnel veteran – and Georgia's Will Myers, a national award recipient for his work on the Bulldogs' 2025 roster.

During sessions from the previous day and that morning, attendees learn that in the past two years of the NFL Draft, "there have been more zero-star players drafted every year than five-stars; 76 0-stars to 49 five-star drafted in that time."

"About 550 to 600 signed as undrafted rookies each year; we see out of them 280 were 0-star prospects," a panelist says.

Kelly goes in-depth on arm length, how it factors into both NFL Draft evaluations and positional recommendations; he notes Clemson also measures hand sizes for all of its prospective players.

Myers points to the Rueben Bain exception – the ex-Miami Hurricanes consensus All-American and 2026 NFL Draft No. 15 selection.

"Georgia, we are a height-weight-speed team," Myers says. "A short-armed defensive lineman, why does it matter if it's Rueben Bain if he's explosive? A short-armed D-lineman loses faster, his pads are captured faster from a long-armed offensive lineman. He wins dirty, his pads are dirty; Rueben Bain is the exception.

"That .031 seconds longer it takes because his pads are hard to capture [because his arms are longer], that matters. I've learned a lot about exceptions; we have some outstanding players that don't fit the criteria and threshold.

"Luke Kuechly is probably the best linebacker I've watched. He had short arms. D'Angelo Ponds at Indiana, outstanding.

"But, you have to ask: Does it stop them from doing something he needs to do?"

Perhaps that answer rests in 2027, when this symposium convenes football's roster building leaders yet again.

Mariners' failure of a season hits new low in Milwaukee

Gabe Lacques
Columnist
USA TODAY

Mariners pitcher Bryce Miller is taken out of the game by Mariners designated hitter Dominic Canzone in the fifth inning against the Brewers at American Family Field on Aug. 18. MICHAEL MCLOONE/IMAGN IMAGES

There's a certain know-it-when-you-see-it moment when a baseball team goes from underperforming to checked out, from disappointing to joylessly headed nowhere.

The Seattle Mariners seem to have reached that point.

Their 22-0 loss to the Milwaukee Brewers on Aug. 18 had it all: managerial malfeasance, an embarrassing gaffe by a superstar and, in the end, an utter lack of fight that belies the fact the Mariners are actually in the American League playoff hunt.

Let's be clear: That doesn't mean they're a good team.

The Mariners are 59-67, have been outscored by 45 runs and have a 60-homer superstar batting .157 – nearly 50 points worse than the lowest-qualified hitter in the major leagues. In any other year, that would typically invite a housecleaning at the trade deadline and perhaps a few rolling heads in management.

In the American League in the year 2026, however, it gets you just four games out of first in the West Division and three games out of the wild card.

Yet Seattle's fortuitous positioning can't wash away how dismal this season has been, particularly since expectations were sky-high after the Mariners came within eight outs of their first World Series appearance ever in 2025.

That Game 7 loss – courtesy of George Springer's historic home run – would not be possible had Mariners manager Dan Wilson not pushed virtually every wrong button in the pivotal seventh inning. And 2026 has been one hell of a hangover.

The Mariners' location in the Pacific Northwest makes them the game's best-kept secret when things are going well. It can also serve to camouflage disappointments.

But you can't hide from 22-0.

The remarkable thing? It was just a 1-0 game going into the bottom of the fifth. That's when Mariners starter Bryce Miller got peppered – single-walk-single-walk-sacrifice fly – with a one-out rally. Even then, it was just 3-0.

Lefty reliever Josh Simpson was warming in the bullpen. Christian Yelich was striding to the plate. Wilson stuck with Miller, not unlike sticking with Eduard Bazardo to face Springer all those months ago in Toronto.

Like Springer, Yelich crushed a three-run homer. And then Wilson lifted Miller once again after the fact. But it was game over at that point.

The ignominy was just beginning, though, reaching a crescendo when position player Leo Rivas was peppered for nine hits and nine runs in the bottom of the eighth. Yet only seven were earned runs, because franchise center fielder Julio Rodriguez lost track of the outs, tossed the ball into the stands and two more runs scored.

Hey, brain farts happen. But combine that with all that's gone wrong with the squad – this was the Mariners' eighth loss in 11 games – and it's a massive spotlight on a bad team.

Up 22, the Brewers saw fit to throw their own position player on the mound – catcher Gary Sanchez – and still, the Mariners couldn't push across a run. So they joined the 2004 Yankees and 1975 Pirates for the worst shutout loss since 1888.

Nonetheless, they woke up Wednesday four games behind Houston in the West. The division is so bad that the Mariners' odds of winning it are 23.1%, per FanGraphs, compared to their 7.4% chance to snag the final wild card, which is just three games out of their reach.

But the Mariners would have to leapfrog six teams, not two, to claim the final wild card. That's just not happening.

Bad seasons happen, certainly.

But this one seems like a continuation of all that went wrong when the Mariners held that 3-2 AL championship series lead, only to go home empty-handed.

It seems a lot likelier there will be consequences for this failure.

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The Knicks are champions! New York hadn't won an NBA title since 1973. Fifty-three years of heartbreak — from Ewing's near-miss in '94 to the '99 Finals run that fell short — tested every fan who ever packed Madison Square Garden. *That wait is over!*

Jalen Brunson and company ripped through the 2026 playoffs, reaching the NBA Finals with 11 consecutive victories that closed out the Hawks, included sweeps of the 76ers and Cavaliers. Then the Knicks polished off Victor Wembanyama and San Antonio in five games to hoist the Larry O'Brien Trophy.

"Garden Glory" is a 160-page hardcover book covering this entire season, from a 53-win regular season through the Finals showdown with San Antonio. The photos, the stories, the moments that made it real. Published by USA TODAY Sports. Printed on premium matte stock. Reserve your copy today.

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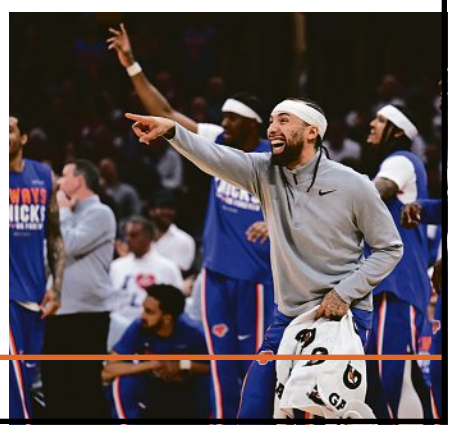


USA TODAY SPORTS

Check for your favorite title on our best-selling books list

"Theo of Golden," stays at No. 1, while "Verity" reenters the list ahead of the movie. **Page 2D**

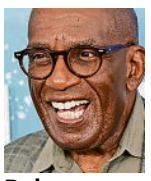
LIFELINE

ELOISA SANCHEZ/REUTERS

MAKING WAVES
SALMA HAYEK

Salma Hayek is a grandmother! The actress, 59, took to Instagram on Aug. 17 to announce that her stepson, François Pinault Jr., welcomed his first baby with wife Lara Cosima Henckel von Donnersmarck. The post featured a sweet video of Hayek, who is from Mexico, cradling the baby boy and speaking to him in Spanish as he smiles and babbles. Hayek also revealed that his name is François, like his father and grandfather. "Although I will call him Panchito," she wrote in the caption. "He seems to love it, and I cannot love him more."

IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY



Roker

Politician **Ron Paul** turns 91. Broadcaster **Connie Chung**, 80. Singer **Robert Plant**, 78. Singer-songwriter **John Hiatt**, 74. Broadcaster **Al Roker**, 72. Actor **Joan Allen**, 70. Filmmaker **David O. Russell**, 68. Singer **Fred Durst** (Limp Bizkit), 56. Actor **Ke Huy Quan**, 55. Actor **Amy Adams**, 52. Actor **Andrew Garfield**, 43. Singer **Demi Lovato**, 34.
– USA TODAY Network

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY
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Aries (March 21-April 19). You're full of bold ideas today. Convinced you can see exactly which direction to go? Not so fast!

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Trust and money issues may become unpredictable today. What's actually yours to give?

Gemini (May 21-June 21). A relationship may suddenly change direction today. Can you stay curious instead of rushing to define what's happening?

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Your schedule could unravel just as you're ready to begin! Prepare for a shift in course.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Give yourself artistic freedom today. What inspires you to feel fired up? Stretch your imagination.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Unexpected professional demands may throw you off center today. What response do you need to protect your emotional bandwidth?

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Ready to listen beyond your assumptions? Today's Sagittarius moon brings an inspired conversation with an unpredictable outcome.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A financial curveball could test your sense of security today. What adjustment would put your mind at ease?

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Your heart is dreaming up an agenda you want to explore. But is disruption rewriting the plan without warning?

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Prioritize your rest today, even if your task list says otherwise.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). A spontaneous idea could reshape your future trajectory. Ready to share it with a friend to help nurture its potential?

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Ideals energize your ambitions into motion. Capitalize on this inspirational flow and advance your professional agenda.

STREAMING

Alexandria Stapleton credits Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson for improving access in making "The Reckoning." JASON MENDEZ/GETTY IMAGES FOR NETFLIX

Filmmaker digs deep for 'Diddy's' 'Reckoning'

Krystie Lee Yandoli USA TODAY

For nearly two years, director Alexandria Stapleton worked in total secrecy to tell the story of one of music's most powerful and, eventually, disgraced figures: Sean "Diddy" Combs. When her four-part Netflix documentary, "Sean Combs: The Reckoning," started streaming in December 2025, the series reached No. 1 on the streaming platform. It's now also the subject of critical acclaim having earned three Emmy nominations for outstanding directing, outstanding documentary or nonfiction series and outstanding picture editing. • Executive-produced by Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, "The Reckoning" examines the rise and fall of Combs, the allegations of violence and sexual misconduct against him, and his history of instilling fear and control to silence those around him.

Stapleton spoke with USA TODAY about the Emmy-nominated Netflix series. The director discussed how she earned the trust of people who were afraid to speak publicly, the threats she received during production, and what Combs' story reveals about power and accountability in the music industry.

Question: Congratulations on three Emmy nominations. What does the recognition mean to you?

Answer: It's one of the highest achievements that you could have. To get that series nomination was incredible because it really represents how there's an entire army of people coming together to make this really important series.

How did it feel to release it, and what did you think of the audience's response?

I had no idea it would blow up the way it did. I remember 50 Cent's reaction when he watched the rough cuts. He said, "I'm telling you, this is going to be huge." Even in the last week before it was released, he told me, "You should prepare yourself for what's going to happen." But I had no idea.

Early in the first episode, viewers see Sean Combs discussing the importance of media strategy. Why did you choose to open the documentary with that conversation?

The documentary about Sean "Diddy" Combs, above performing at the MTV Video Music Awards in 2023, was two years in the making. DIA DIPASUPIL/GETTY IMAGES

It sets a tone for everything that you're going to watch and it makes you question Combs at every moment. It makes you think about: What's reality and what's spin? When is he trying to use reverse psychology in the media to spin a story in his favor?

See COMBS, Page 2D

CELEBRITIES

'Peter Pan Girl' is OK embracing inner child

Owen Carry
USA TODAY

Christina Toni Kulusich is a Disneyland superfan who extensively documents her trips to her 91,000 followers on TikTok at @babytoni99.

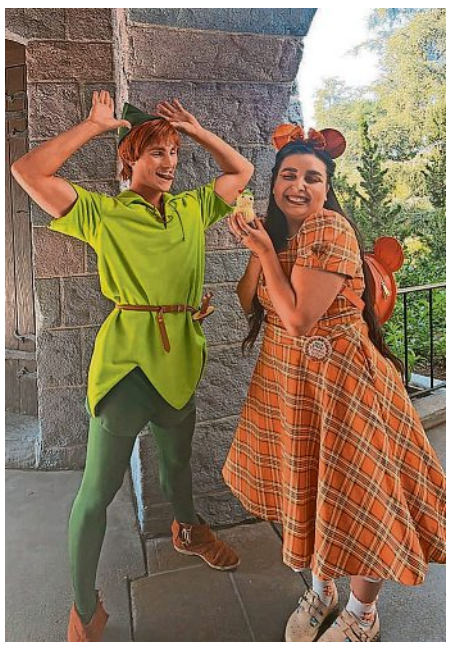
Every year she photographs and films herself with Peter Pan, who is played by various actors. "10 years ago, I met the lost boy who changed my life," her caption reads on a 2025 photo slideshow documenting the photos she has taken since January 2015.

And this is what has brought her a lot of attention online in the past week. After one of her recent videos with Peter Pan received more than 29 million views, many gave her the nickname "Peter Pan Girl" while critiquing her interactions in viral videos and memes and speculating on how the performers feel about them.

"People can take something really small and turn it into something big without even knowing what it's truly about," Kulusich told USA TODAY in an interview Friday, Aug. 14.

The discourse was sparked on July 31 when she shared a video of herself giving a Peter Pan actor a handmade crochet keychain. Some edits of the clip show the character in black-and-white, staring at the camera, emulating a horror movie scene.

"I know he went on a cigarette break after this," reads a comment with more than 1.5 million likes on Kulusich's original video.



TikTok's "Peter Pan Girl," known as @babytonii99, next to a Peter Pan actor at Disneyland in 2026.
PROVIDED BY TONI/@BABYTONII99

Kulusich is proud of her Disney fandom

Kulusich, 27, said it's "been a little rough" this week with the internet making memes of her. "I've never expected to, like, blow up this much – of like, the entire internet to know I exist."

She is a proud "Disney Adult," a subculture of grown-ups who make pilgrimages to Disney parks. "I think being a Disney Adult means letting out your inner child," she says.

She says she has been going to Disney parks since she was little, but she has had an annual pass only since 2015. She says she tries to go to Disneyland once a week.

Kulusich says she relates to how Peter Pan is canonically "the boy who never grew up," but her love of the character started because of her relationship with the actors. A Peter Pan she met in 2015 had a positive impact on her. "He just made a really magical experience for me the first time."

When asked her favorite thing at the park, she said, "Surprisingly, it's not 'meet Peter Pan,' " laughing. "My favorite thing to do is actually go on Astro Blasters. It's the game where you, like, shoot things."

Kulusich says that despite online rumors, she was not banned from the park. "I actually was there yesterday," she says. She said she didn't seek out Peter Pan.

See PETER PAN GIRL, Page 2D

USA TODAY BEST-SELLING BOOKS BOOKLIST.USATODAY.COM

☐ Rank this week ☐ Rank last week

		TITLE/AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	C
1	1	**Theo of Golden**/Levi, Allen	Atria Books	Literary	F
2	3	**Dungeon Crawler Carl**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
3	5	**Yesteryear**/Burke, Caro Claire	Knopf Publishing Group	Feminist	F
4	4	**The Calamity Club**/Stockett, Kathryn	Spiegel & Grau	Literary	F
5	n/a	**Insatiable: The Edge of Darkness Trilogy**/Rivers, Leigh	Zpn	Romance - Suspense	F
6	n/a	**What to Cook When You Don't Feel Like Cooking: Make It Fast**/Chambers, Caroline	Union Square & Co.	Methods - Quick & Easy	NF
7	n/a	**The Butcher Legacy: A Dr. Wren Muller Novel**/Urquhart, Alaina	Zando	Thrillers - Suspense	F
8	6	**Whistler**/Patchett, Ann	Harper	Literary	F
9	n/a	**God Doesn't Relapse: Sex, Drugs, and the Life That Almost Killed Me**/Grace, Matt	Lasega Books	Personal Memoirs	NF
10	9	**The Wedding People: A Novel**/Espach, Alison	Holt Paperbacks		NF
11	11	**The Odyssey**/Homer	W. W. Norton & Company	Classics	F
12	n/a	**Verity**/Hoover, Colleen	Grand Central Publishing	Women	F
13	15	**Daggermouth**/Wolfe, H. M.	Scarlett Press	General	F
14	n/a	**Courage Can Save Us: Ten Extraordinary Americans and the Fight for Our Future**/Barcott, Rye	Bloomsbury Publishing	Leadership	NF
15	n/a	**Dandadan, Vol. 20**/Tatsu, Yukinobu	Viz Media	Humorous	NF
16	14	**Project Hail Mary**/Weir, Andy	Ballantine Books	Thrillers - Suspense	F
17	n/a	**The Wandering Inn: Book One, Part One of the Wandering Inn Series**/Pirateaba	Harper Voyager	Humorous - General	F
18	19	**Lights Out: An Into Darkness Novel**/Allen, Navessa	Zando - Slowburn	Romance - New Adult	F
19	n/a	**Toddler Jumbo Workbook**/Scholastic	Scholastic Teaching Resources		NF
20	23	**The Outsiders (Platinum)**/Hinton, S. E.	Viking Books for Young Readers	Classics	F
21	n/a	**The Secrets We Hide: A North Falls Thriller**/Slaughter, Karin	William Morrow & Company	Women	F
22	n/a	**The True Meaning of Love**/Steel, Danielle	Delacorte Press	Women	F
23	13	**Carl's Doomsday Scenario**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
24	n/a	**Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Friendly Spooky Stories 2: From the Creator of Diary of a Wimpy Kid**/Kinney, Jeff	Amulet Books	Humorous Stories	F
25	21	**Fahrenheit 451 (Reissue)**/Bradbury, Ray D.	Simon & Schuster	Classics	F
26	n/a	**Flawless (Collector's Edition)**/Silver, Elsie	Bloom Books	Romance - Contemporary	F
27	n/a	**Devil (Deluxe Edition)**/Simone, Sierra	Bloom Books	Romance - Contemporary	F
28	28	**The Dungeon Anarchist's Cookbook**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
29	10	**The Unknown**/Sager, Riley	Dutton	Thrillers - Suspense	F
30	n/a	**The Dangerous, Dadgummit, DeMoss Gang From Durango**/DeMoss, Danny	Mission Driven Press	Action & Adventure - General	F
31	91	**The Giver: A Newbery Award Winner**/Lowry, Lois	Clarion Books	Coming of Age	F
32	2	**Adversary to the Villain**/Maehrer, Hannah Nicole	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Romance - Romantic Comedy	F
33	39	**The Gate of the Feral Gods**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
34	36	**Red Rising**/Brown, Pierce	Del Rey Books	Action & Adventure	F
35	24	**The Correspondent**/Evans, Virginia	Crown Publishing Group (NY)	Women	F
36	30	**Circe**/Miller, Madeline	Back Bay Books	Literary	F
37	n/a	**Under the Falls**/Russo, Richard	Knopf Publishing Group	Literary	F
38	49	**Murdoku: 80 Murder Mystery Logic Puzzles**/Garand, Manuel	Puzzlewright Press	Logic & Brain Teasers	NF
39	n/a	**Reliquary**/Whitten, Hannah	Run for It	Psychological	F
40	n/a	**Deviant King (Deluxe Edition)**/Kent, Rina	Bloom Books	Romance - Contemporary	F
41	46	**Haunting Adeline**/Carlton, H D	Zando	Romance - Contemporary	F
42	29	**Regime Change: Inside the Imperial Presidency of Donald Trump**/Haberman, M. and Swan, J.	Simon & Schuster	American Government	NF
43	27	**Cool Machine**/Whitehead, Colson	Doubleday Books	Literary	F
44	n/a	**Bubbles (Deluxe Edition)**/James, Tate	Bloom Books	Romance - Contemporary	F
45	40	**Warriors Graphic Novel: The New Prophecy, Part One of Three**/Hunter, Erin	Harperalley	Action & Adventure - General	F
46	32	**Pink Ink: A Dark Romance**/St Graves, Avina	Gallery Books	Romance - Suspense	F
47	n/a	**Bury Our Bones in the Midnight Soil**/Schwab, V. E.	Tor Books	Fantasy - General	F
48	70	**Dungeon Crawler Carl, Vol. 1 (Graphic Novel)**/Dinniman, Matt	Vault Comics	Fantasy	F
49	43	**I Who Have Never Known Men**/Harpman, Jacqueline	Transit Books	Literary	F
50	44	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**/Carle, Eric	Philomel Books	Classics	F

WHAT AMERICA'S READING® The book list appears every Thursday. You also can find it at booklist.usatoday.com. Each week, USA TODAY collects sales data from booksellers representing a variety of outlets: bookstore chains, independent bookstores, mass merchandisers and online retailers. Using that data, we determine the 150 top-selling titles of the week.

Combs

Continued from Page 1D

It took you two years to complete "The Reckoning." What was the most stressful part?

There were so many challenges. In particular, the challenge of having the people who participated feel comfortable and making sure that I wasn't leaving them feeling exploited. I wanted them to really feel like they were giving interviews and testimonies that allowed them to tell me the good, the bad and the ugly. We were committed to taking our time to paint a much larger, comprehensive picture of his world that hadn't been shown before.

How did you earn the trust of so many who were afraid to speak publicly about Combs? Was 50 Cent helpful in securing those interviews?

50 was completely instrumental in that. We started the film before there was even an indictment, and I think his involvement provided people with a sense of security. Being the executive producer, he had conversations with some of the people who participated, which was a huge part of gaining access. Also, once I connected with people and they became comfortable with me, they would advocate for me.

Were you ever afraid of Sean Combs yourself?

I was, and it wasn't only about physical safety. We had incidents while shooting with some unsavory characters who made threats. It wasn't directly from Combs; it was fans and people in the extended world around him. It required us to operate like a Navy SEAL operation. No one knew where we were, so when people found us and made threats, we took it seriously. We ran a tight ship. Traditionally, when you're filming you tell your producing partners where you are and who you're filming with. We never released that information beyond the people who had to be there.

What did you learn while making the documentary that shocked you?

The unseen footage of Combs [filming himself before his trial]. I didn't plan on having it. It came from left field. Watching it was validating because it showed how dubious and manipulative he could be. In the conversation at the beginning of the series, he owns that he's going to play in your face and use the media to paint the image he wants to uphold.

Director Alexandria Stapleton attends a "Reckoning" screening in Los Angeles. GETTY IMAGES

How did you acquire the footage?

I'm not going to reveal anything about my source. It came into my orbit. I had no idea that footage was being recorded.

Have you heard from Combs or anyone in his orbit about a reaction?

No. I know what the public knows. His mother publicly said she wasn't a fan and Combs responded through his representatives. I haven't had any contact with him or anyone else in his circle.

As several high-profile men accused of abuse attempt public comebacks, what does this moment say about our culture's relationship to accountability? Do you think these stories are still important?

I believe that people inherently want to live in a community where we are protected, we treat people with respect, and we don't condone abusive and exploitative situations. But I think we have our work cut out for us. My way of contributing is as thoroughly as I can, presenting you with a set of facts and stories to get people talking and thinking. There was a Me Too movement, but there wasn't a Me Too movement in hip-hop. What does that look like? This series was a journey into that space, and it's been cool to see people standing up to that behavior.

Do you think there's more of Combs' story to tell? Would you be interested in that?

It's not over. I'm not opposed to continuing, but it would have to break new ground. I still think there's a major story beyond Combs himself about the ecosystem of money and power that allowed this to happen – and the people who knew it was happening. That is a reckoning.

Peter Pan Girl

Continued from Page 1D

"I don't even always meet him," she says. "I held a [crochet] dinosaur for nine weeks because we didn't see each other. … I wouldn't have had it for nine weeks if I was that crazy trying to find him."

Not all interactions with fans are welcome

Andrey Lull, an actor who portrayed Peter Pan and other characters at Walt Disney World in Orlando in 2015, says that during training, Disney instructors warned him about adult patrons who might figure out his real name, address and social media accounts.

"I had people that learned my schedule," he says. "They would just show up, and they would be like the first one in for every single one of my sets. But after a while, you learn how to deal with them."

A "set" refers to a block of time that character actors are onstage and interacting with guests. Lull says they involved taking pictures and having improvised conversations, which often circled back to learned character catchphrases and movie references. Lull says he typically had five 45-minute sets a day.

Sarah Daniels, an actress who portrayed a host of characters at Disney parks and on Disney Cruise Line from 2006 through 2017, told USA TODAY her interactions with children were "just so magical."

Lull also spoke highly of children. "It wasn't the kids that were weird. It was mostly the adults and the teenagers."

In 2021, an actress playing Tinkerbell claimed she was harassed by several married men at Disney World when she was 16. Disney said it provided "multiple resources to protect cast members' wellbeing" in a statement to The Independent, including on-site police, and encouraged them to report problems. They said repeat offenders can be banned permanently from all Disney parks. (USA TODAY reached out to a Disney representative for comment but got no immediate response.)

Kulusich says she has witnessed other Disneyland patrons touch character actors or ask them inappropriate questions. She says some male visitors "meet the princesses over and over and over and take photos. They do that every week."

Christina Toni Kulusich and a Peter Pan actor at Disneyland in California. PROVIDED BY CHRISTINA TONI KULUSICH

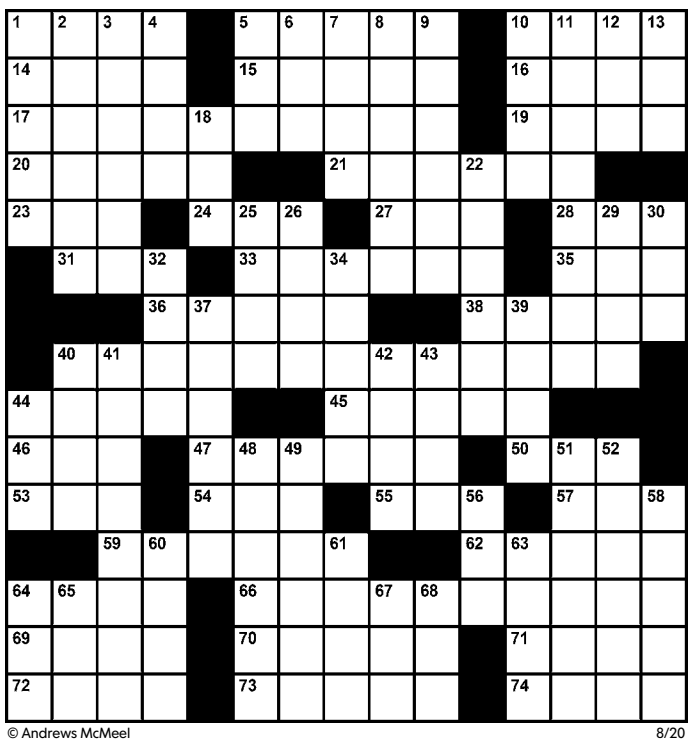
She insists she treats the actors with respect, largely because she used to work at Disneyland in 2018 at the California Adventure Park and various food venues. "I strongly believe that because I'm someone who has worked for Disney, when I go [there], I always ask them, 'Can I hug you?' … I allow them to lead the interactions. So I'll wait for him to be like, 'Let's go take a walk.' I'm not going to initiate the walk."

Kulusich says she has kept in touch with the original Peter Pan she met in 2015. But she tries not to think of them as individuals – the character is singular. "I [try] to keep the Disney magic, as like, there's only one, and he's the Peter. But I do have favorites."

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amie Walker
BY Steve Jopek

GETTING ATTACHED



ACROSS
1 Phoenix Opera solo
5 "Do your ___!"
10 Take orders from
14 Pear suitable for poaching
15 Really mad
16 Like stallions and bulls
17 Alley target in a Wii Sports game
19 Ticks off
20 Do better than
21 Areas of land
23 Drink that might be served with crumpets
24 Need to pay
27 "___ corte de rosas y espinas" (Sarah J. Maas novel translated by Margara Averbach)
28 Spigot
31 Trips around the sun (Abbr.)
33 Proves versatile
35 "Days of ___ Lives"
36 Orchard units
38 Counterpart of ecstasy
40 Flash seen before hearing thunder
44 "Hidden Figures" star Janelle
45 Airport annoyance
46 Long, long time
47 Vegas venue whose interior includes the world's largest LED screen
50 Write to Dear Abby, say
53 Boxing ref's call
54 "___ Te Ching"
55 The Broncos, on a scoreboard
57 Brain scan (Abbr.)
59 Home on a Kingdomino starting tile
62 Turn into mush
64 Sign of things to come
66 Classic parade streamer material
69 Dryer fuzz
70 Causing goose bumps
71 Gorillas and gibbons
72 Prom partner
73 "I'm ___ in the back of the car / And I cried like a baby comin' home from the bar"
74 In this location

DOWN
1 Monastery figure
2 "Carol" star Mara
3 "That's the truth!"
4 6-Down that defends legal rights
5 Take the prize
6 4-Down, e.g.
7 Spellbound
8 Provoke
9 Rent payer
10 Leave out
11 Happy hour seat
12 Yellowstone creature
13 "Definitely!"
18 Stock debut, for short
22 Honeydew alternative
25 Toad's bump
26 Blissful spot
29 Woman with nieces, say
30 Be nosy
32 It's a long story!
34 Parenthetical bit
37 Ice holders
39 "El perro" painter Francisco
40 Window-shop, perhaps
41 Not guilty
42 Brainy person
43 Pure delight
44 Was introduced to
48 Tapped gently
49 ___-than-thou
51 Colorful wrap
52 Real gem
56 "All Things Considered" network
58 Honking flock
60 Poker payment
61 Beige shade
63 State home to Bryce Canyon
64 Ancient
65 "The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement" protagonist
67 Folks
68 Cartoon shriek

Wednesday's Answer

8/19

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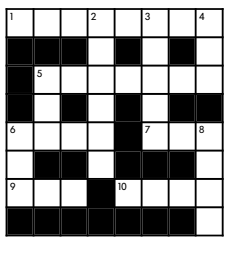
TXTPERT



8/20

Across	Down
1. 76774343	2. 723474
5. 7833464	3. 32479
6. 7327	4. 344
7. 926	5. 743
9. 832	6. 748
10. 3685	8. 6455

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Today's theme
Food

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

8/19

Yesterday's solution

Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
Want solutions? **answers.usatoday.com**
Feedback: **feedback@usatoday.com**

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

5					6	7		
	3	8			9		2	
			3	2				8
				4		9		6
			7	6	1			
6		3		5				
3				9	5			
	1		2			4	8	
		5	6					7

8/20

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

			1		3
		6	4		
	5		6		
		1		4	
		4	2		
1		2			

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★☆

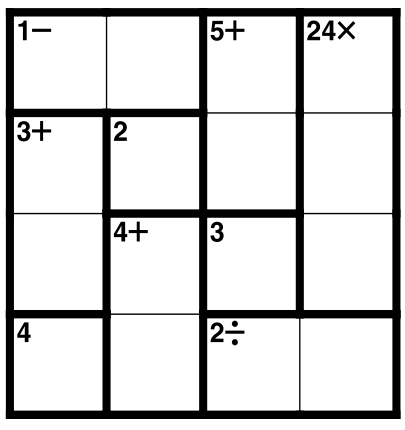
Wednesday's Answers

6	5	8	7	1	9	3	4	2
2	7	9	3	4	6	1	8	5
3	4	1	8	5	2	9	7	6
5	9	2	1	7	3	8	6	4
4	6	3	2	9	8	5	1	7
8	1	7	5	6	4	2	9	3
9	8	5	4	2	7	6	3	1
7	2	6	9	3	1	4	5	8
1	3	4	6	8	5	7	2	9

2	5	1	4	3	6
3	6	4	5	2	1
4	3	6	2	1	5
5	1	2	3	6	4
6	4	3	1	5	2
1	2	5	6	4	3

8/19

KENKEN



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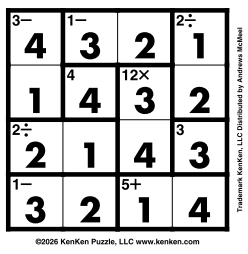
1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



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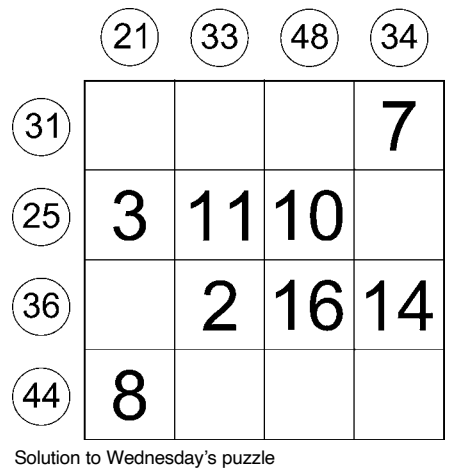
KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo

Difficulty: **EASY**



Solution to Wednesday's puzzle

16	6	2	10
8	11	1	5
4	7	15	14
9	12	13	3

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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8/20/26

Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 8/20

Find and Circle:
Four U.S. coins ☑☐☐☐
Four four-letter units of length ☐☐☐☐
Three shapes ☐☐☐
Three mammals starting with W ☐☐☐
Two U.S. state capitals ☐☐

Wednesday's answer: PLUM KIWI PEAR LIME DATE / STREAM CREEK BROOK RIVER / LIEUTENANT ADMIRAL CAPTAIN / OHIO UTAH / GOUDA SWISS

D V H M Q Z N I C K E L
J I N I V U E B R L N G
L L M L J R A E Q O O M
E A M E A H V R G H D E
S V P U C N T A T R C L
A O Q N E O T R A E V A
E S I D O C A Y L P R S
W O L F O W B P E N N Y
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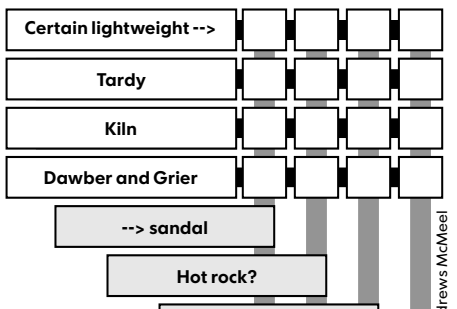
QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 8/20



Wednesday's Answer

D	E	C	K
O	N	L	Y
P	O	O	L
E	S	T	E

8/19

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
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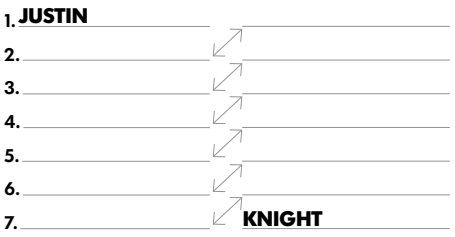
UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 8/20



Clues:
1. ___ ___ in "Clerks III"
2. Ages prior to
3. 2013 Ethan Hawke film
4. 1988 De Niro/Grodin movie
5. Pursue; chase
6. Following sunset
7. 2008 Heath Ledger movie (with "The")

Wednesday's Answer

FACTORY	OUTLET
OUTLET	MALL
MALL	COP
COP	LAND
LAND	ON
ON	TIME
TIME	MACHINE

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BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Clawed creature
5 Brilliance
10 Auction
14 Traditional knowledge
15 Box
16 Cabal
17 Eager
18 Eye color
19 Speckled horse
20 Science of teaching
22 Riddle
24 Zorro's marks
25 Metal fastener
26 Flattens to the ground
28 True
32 Diamond and Armstrong
33 Die down
35 Opp. of SSW
36 Vaulted room
37 Watery ice
38 Behaves
39 — canto
40 Meager
41 Steer
42 Gumshoes
44 Femme fatale
45 Overly
46 Flat candy
47 Gateway
50 Greek sea god
54 Toward shelter
55 On the left, nautically
57 Asian desert
58 Fibber
59 Salon liquid
60 By — or by crook
61 Parents
62 Direct
63 "... poem lovely as a —"

DOWN
1 Loud sound
2 Wander
3 Lacking rainfall
4 Fascinate
5 Repeats
6 Rocky heights
7 Like a goldbrick
8 Snacked
9 Mind-reader
10 Short, fast race
11 Like a bump on — —
12 Clayey soil
13 Bunsen burner
21 Turns a horse to the right
23 Pleasant
26 Repulse
27 Usher's beat
28 Eat no food
29 "I give up!"
30 Writer — Chekhov
31 Fearing that
32 Seizes
33 Woeful cry
34 Bakery item
37 Learned ones
38 Closely sealed
40 Old Greek portico
41 Evergreen tree
43 Says
44 Family member
46 Code name
47 — Springs
48 Hodgepodge
49 500 sheets
50 Corn bread
51 Place of entry
52 Orchestra woodwind
53 Sports shoe brand
56 Stone

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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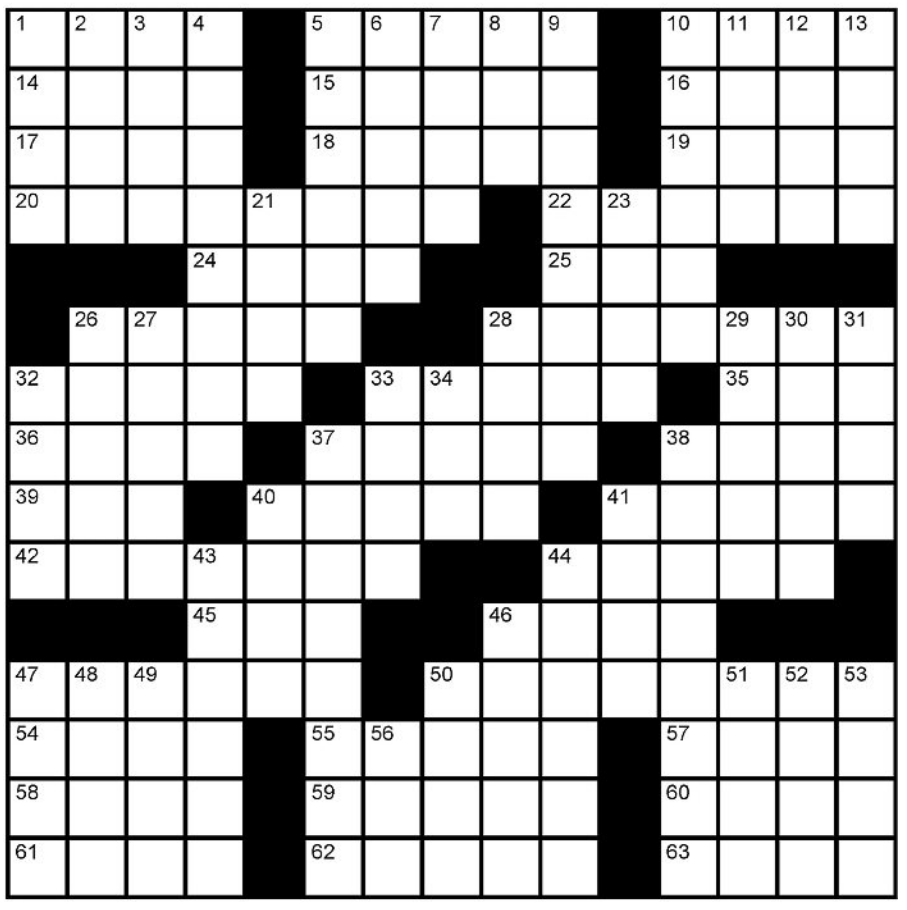

DON'T QUOTE ME®

Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu offers this warning.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
ALWAYS CARE PEOPLE PRISONER WHAT YOU

"___ ABOUT ___ OTHER _____ THINK AND ___ WILL _____ BE THEIR _____."

8/20

Wednesday's Answer: "Celebrate what you've accomplished, but raise the bar a little higher each time you succeed." - Mia Hamm

© WIGGLES 3D GAMES

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 cozy up on the couch (7)	
2 buttering up (10)	
3 mini burgers (7)	
4 Oscar-winning writer Sarah (6)	
5 offer sympathy (7)	
6 gauche (8)	
7 imitates Chloe Kim (10)	

BO	SNU	FLAT	DOLE	ERS
LL	TL	SLID	OW	TE
SN	RI	TAC	GGLE	CON
NG	ARDS	EY	PO	ESS

Wednesday's Answers: 1. ZOOS 2. GROSSEST 3. EQUINOX 4. COLMAN 5. STRAWBERRY 6. KNELT 7. MEDDLED 8/20

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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

IMLTI

IRNMO

AEHVEB

RNREUN

Get the free **JUST JUMBLE** app • Follow us on **Facebook**

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: ESSAY REBEL STREWN PADDLE
Answer: As the train pulled away, those on the platform waving farewell were — "BYE-STANDERS"

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NATION&WORLD EXTRA

Ukraine confirms new defense chief

Ousted predecessor issues call for wartime elections

A resident walks through a street market hit by a Russian drone in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, on Aug. 19. REUTERS

Dan Peleschuk and Yuliia Dysa
REUTERS

KYIV – Ukrainian lawmakers appointed a new defense minister Aug. 19, hours after his ousted predecessor dealt a major blow to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy with a call for elections in wartime.

Yevhenii Khmara, a former top special forces operative, takes up the critical defense portfolio amid fresh political turmoil for the president, who had faced weeks of protests over his dismissal of 35-year-old reformer Mykhailo Fedorov.

Khmara's appointment also took place just hours after anti-corruption authorities announced charges against a deputy chief of Zelenskyy's office as part of an alleged $3 million money-laundering scheme.

Fedorov's removal as defense minister in July brought thousands of demonstrators onto the streets in rare wartime protests over a surprise shake-up seen as poorly communicated to the public at a critical time in the war with Russia.

His bold call for elections in the fifth year of fighting drew accusations of populism in a country where a majority of people still oppose a wartime vote, even though many argue that Ukraine needs fresh faces in power.

"He chose to move on the populist trajectory, underlining the risks and challenges for democratic process of election," said Lesia Bidochko, a policy fellow at the European Policy Institute in Kyiv.

Newly appointed Ukrainian Defense Minister Yevhenii Khmara is a former top special forces operative. REUTERS

Former Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov said Ukraine's democratic process "cannot be held hostage by Russia." ALINA SMUTKO/REUTERS FILE

Zelenskyy has yet to respond directly to Fedorov's call, but the president's communications adviser Dmytro Lytvyn told reporters that "Russia's daily drone and missile strikes are the exhaustive answer to this question."

Major challenge

In his statement late on Aug. 18, Fedorov said the country faced a crisis of governance and that Ukraine's democratic process "cannot be held hostage by Russia."

Wartime elections are prohibited under law.

An Aug. 5 poll by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology showed 57% of Ukrainians believe they should only take place after the war, given that hundreds of thousands of troops are on the front line and Russian missiles and drones are raining down on Ukrainian cities, towns and villages.

"We must find a legal, safe and realistic mechanism that will allow Ukraine to renew its full democratic process even in the conditions of a long war," Fedorov said.

He did not say whether he would compete in any election, but another recent poll indicated the tech-savvy Fedorov – Zelenskyy's longest-standing ally – would comfortably beat his

See UKRAINE, Page 5NN

U.S. debt crosses threshold of $40T

Total has doubled in less than a decade

David Lawder and Jacob Bogage
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Total U.S. debt has topped $40 trillion for the first time, the Treasury Department said on Aug. 19, drawing fresh warnings that a fiscal crisis is brewing as ballooning costs for social safety net programs and interest payments far outstrip revenues held back by tax cuts.

The Treasury's latest daily cash and debt balances statement showed total public debt outstanding at $40.047 trillion on Aug. 18, a total that includes Treasury securities held by the public of $32.266 trillion and intra-governmental debt holdings of $7.782 trillion.

The federal government's IOU has now more than doubled in less than a decade, from $19.95 trillion when President Donald Trump was sworn in for the first time in January 2017.

Roughly one-third of that increase occurred during two years of frantic government borrowing to fund the COVID-19 pandemic responses undertaken by Trump and former President Joe Biden, while the fiscal policy choices of both presidents combined with long-running tax-and-spending imbalances to account for the rest.

Budget watchdog groups have been anticipating the crossing of the threshold for weeks and have issued stark warnings that a full-blown debt crisis could erupt unless lawmakers confront an unsustainable fiscal outlook and raise taxes, cut spending or both.

"Forty trillion dollars of debt doesn't exist solely on the government's ledgers; it is felt throughout the economy and finds its way to the pocketbooks of people one way or another," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

"The more we borrow, the more we exacerbate inflation, squeeze out other

See DEBT, Page 5NN

A man passes by the National Debt Clock in New York City on Aug. 19. It now stands at $40.047 trillion. BRENDAN MCDERMID/REUTERS

ANALYSIS

ABC says FCC intimidation has forced changes

Disney and ABC said the Trump administration's actions have chilled the TV network's editorial decision-making. MARIO ANZUONI/REUTERS FILE

Accuses administration of using pressure tactics

Dawn Chmielewski and David Shepardson
REUTERS

ABC is accusing President Donald Trump's administration of employing pressure tactics that have forced the television network to make programming compromises such as refraining from booking political candidates on its popular daytime talk show "The View" for fear of retaliation.

The network and its parent company, Disney, sued the Federal Communications Commission on Aug. 18 in an effort to block the agency's unusual early review of broadcast licenses for eight Disney-owned local TV stations. They argue that the administration is unlawfully seeking to punish the network over its broadcast content and force changes in its programming.

Carr

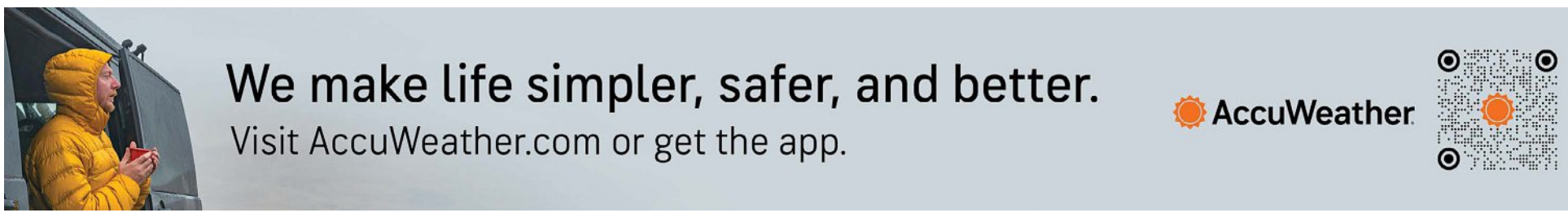
In a Reuters interview, FCC Chair Brendan Carr denied that the agency was infringing on Disney's free speech rights or responding to Trump's dislike of specific content.

The legal fight highlights the volatile relationship that Trump and his administration have had with the media. Trump has repeatedly since 2024 called for the FCC to revoke the licenses of ABC stations, most recently after the network declined in July to air a primetime address he gave on election security.

Disney and ABC said that demands made by the FCC during the license review process and Trump's public threats already have chilled the network's editorial decision-making.

The FCC, according to the lawsuit,

See ABC, Page 5NN

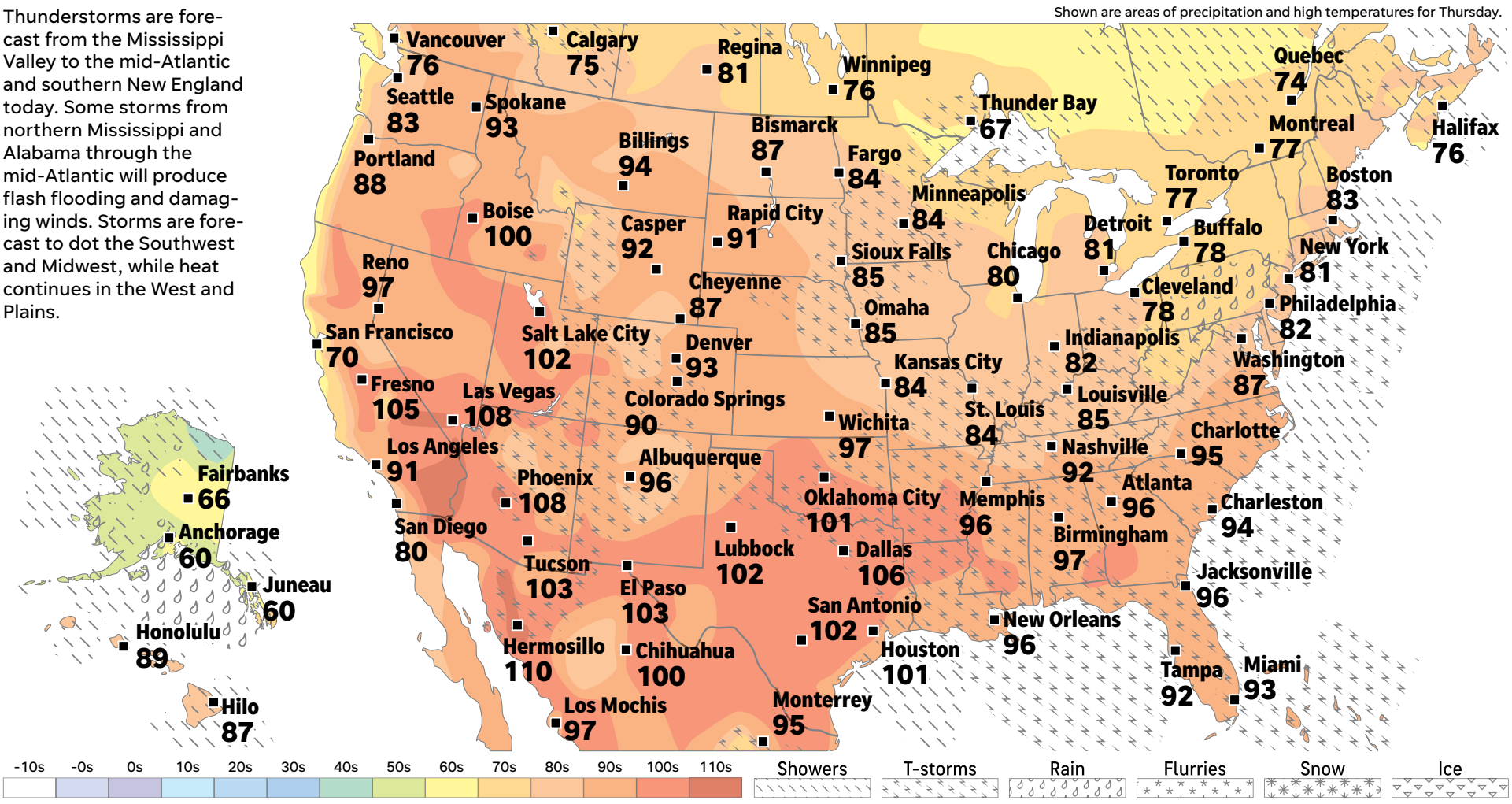


NATIONAL SUMMARY

Thunderstorms are forecast from the Mississippi Valley to the mid-Atlantic and southern New England today. Some storms from northern Mississippi and Alabama through the mid-Atlantic will produce flash flooding and damaging winds. Storms are forecast to dot the Southwest and Midwest, while heat continues in the West and Plains.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Thursday.



WEDNESDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)

High: **119** at Death Valley, CA
Low: **34** at Stanley, ID
Precip: **5.17”** at Panama City, FL

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)

High: **117** at Omidieh, Iran
Low: **24** at Calama, Chile
Precip: **5.04”** at Dawei, Myanmar

TODAY IN HISTORY

Heavy rain from the remains of Hurricane Camille on and around Aug. 20, 1969, killed 151 people and caused $100 million in damage in the upper James River Basin of Virginia.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: In what year were hurricanes first named?

A: 1953

NATIONAL CITIES THURSDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Aberdeen, SD	85/55/c	26
Abilene, TX	105/78/s	45
● Accomac, VA	88/70/t	51
Adrian, MI	81/56/s	25
Akron, OH	77/57/t	75
Alamogordo, NM	100/69/pc	47
● Alexandria, VA	85/70/t	50
Alliance, OH	75/58/t	75
Amarillo, TX	98/70/c	75
● Ames, IA	81/63/t	25
● Anderson, SC	98/73/t	50
● Appleton, WI	82/64/s	25
● Asheville, NC	88/67/t	51
Ashland, OH	78/58/t	75
● Athens, GA	97/73/pc	60
Augusta, GA	99/73/pc	58
Austin, TX	104/78/s	75
Bartlesville, OK	100/68/pc	60
Battle Creek, MI	80/59/s	25
Bedford, IN	82/64/t	45
Binghamton, NY	70/52/pc	35
Bluffton, SC	94/80/t	77
Bremerton, WA	85/54/s	44
Brockton, MA	88/59/pc	60
Brownwood, TX	104/73/pc	52
Burlington, IA	80/63/pc	43
● Burlington, NC	94/70/t	52
Burlington, VT	79/55/pc	40
Cambridge, OH	79/62/t	36
Camdenton, MO	86/65/pc	31
Canandaigua, NY	76/55/s	35
Canton, OH	76/59/t	75
Carlsbad, NM	104/73/s	72
Chambersburg, PA	74/63/t	39
● Cherry Hill, NJ	80/66/t	60
Cincinnati, OH	81/67/t	54
● Clarksville, TN	90/71/t	50
Coldwater, MI	80/57/pc	25
Columbus, OH	80/64/t	44
Corning, NY	73/52/sh	36
Corpus Christi, TX	98/78/s	75
● Daytona Beach, FL	93/76/t	75
Deming, NM	102/71/t	50
DeRidder, LA	99/77/s	56
● Des Moines, IA	81/65/pc	25
Detroit, MI	81/59/s	25
Devils Lake, ND	78/58/pc	27
Dover, NH	83/59/pc	25
El Paso, TX	103/76/s	75
Elmira, NY	73/52/pc	37
Erie, PA	77/59/s	42
Eugene, OR	91/56/pc	25
Evansville, IN	85/68/t	75
● Fall River, MA	87/63/sh	60
● Farmington, NM	98/66/t	49
● Fayetteville, NC	97/75/pc	60
Fond du Lac, WI	80/62/s	25
● Fort Myers, FL	94/78/pc	25
Fort Smith, AR	106/76/pc	53
Framingham, MA	86/57/pc	60
Freeport, IL	80/60/s	25
Fremont, OH	77/59/t	47
Fort Collins, CO	95/62/pc	75
● Gadsden, AL	95/71/t	47
● Gainesville, FL	94/74/t	25
Galesburg, IL	80/60/pc	25
● Gastonia, NC	96/70/t	51
Glen Rose, TX	107/78/pc	50
Gonzales, LA	97/77/t	55
Great Falls, MT	91/56/s	48
Green Bay, WI	80/60/s	25
Greenville, SC	94/72/t	50
● Hackensack, NJ	81/65/r	51
Hagerstown, MD	78/64/t	39
Hattiesburg, MS	99/75/t	34
● Henderson, KY	84/66/t	75
● Hendersonville, NC	89/68/t	51
Herkimer, NY	78/51/pc	35
Hillsdale, MI	80/56/pc	25
Holland, MI	81/57/s	25
Hornell, NY	75/54/c	38
Houma, LA	94/76/t	53
Howell, MI	81/56/s	25
Hutchinson, KS	96/68/s	49
● Hyannis, MA	83/67/pc	65
Indianapolis, IN	82/66/pc	25
Iowa City, IA	81/63/pc	36
Ithaca, NY	73/52/pc	35
● Jackson, MS	100/76/t	51
● Jackson, TN	93/71/t	45
● Jacksonville, FL	96/75/t	75
Jacksonville, NC	93/76/t	52
Kent, OH	76/57/t	75
Kewanee, IL	80/60/pc	25
Keyser, WV	77/65/t	35
● Kinston, NC	95/74/pc	52
● Knoxville, TN	89/71/t	52
Lafayette, IN	80/59/pc	50
Lafayette, LA	96/78/s	55
● Lakeland, FL	91/75/t	25
Lansing, MI	80/57/s	25
Las Cruces, NM	100/70/s	80
Lebanon, PA	73/62/r	50
● Leesburg, FL	91/76/t	25
● Levittown, PA	78/65/t	60
Lincoln, IL	83/57/pc	25
● Louisville, KY	85/70/t	75
Lubbock, TX	102/73/pc	75
Manitowoc, WI	77/64/s	25
Mansfield, OH	78/57/t	47
● Marshall, NC	87/66/t	45
● Marshfield, WI	80/61/t	25
Massillon, OH	77/59/t	75
● McLean, VA	84/68/t	50
● Melbourne, FL	93/76/t	75
● Memphis, TN	96/76/t	60
Middletown, NY	76/57/sh	35
Milford, MA	85/57/sh	60
Milwaukee, WI	78/63/s	25
Monroe, MI	79/58/s	25
● Monroe, LA	104/79/t	53
Montgomery, AL	97/73/t	45
Muncie, IN	80/60/pc	46
● Murfreesboro, TN	87/69/t	51
● Naples, FL	92/79/t	75
● Nashville, TN	92/72/t	51
● Neptune, NJ	80/68/t	50
● New Bedford, MA	85/62/pc	60
● New Bern, NC	93/75/t	52
New Philadelphia, OH	77/60/t	75
Newark, OH	80/61/t	44
Newton, NJ	75/59/r	50
● New York, NY	81/65/t	51
● Norwich, CT	84/60/t	58
● Ocala, FL	93/75/t	75
Oklahoma City, OK	101/73/c	95
Opelousas, LA	97/76/t	55
● Oshkosh, WI	80/62/s	25
● Palm Beach, FL	92/81/t	75
Palm Springs, CA	112/87/pc	90
Panama City, FL	91/79/t	25
Pekin, IL	83/60/pc	25
Pensacola, FL	93/77/t	75
Peoria, IL	81/62/pc	25
● Petersburg, VA	93/72/t	46
● Phoenix, AZ	108/90/t	101
Port Huron, MI	77/51/pc	45
Portsmouth, NH	84/62/pc	25
Poughkeepsie, NY	78/58/sh	35
● Providence, RI	84/64/pc	46
Pueblo, CO	95/62/t	75
Quincy, MA	86/61/sh	60
Redding, CA	101/67/pc	55
Reno, NV	97/64/pc	25
Ravenna, OH	76/57/t	75
Richmond, IN	81/61/t	50
Rochester, NY	75/52/s	48
Rockford, IL	81/59/s	25
Ruidoso, NM	87/60/t	50
Salem, OR	90/58/pc	25
Salina, KS	93/69/pc	43
● Salinas, CA	72/56/pc	52
● Salisbury, MD	89/70/t	53
San Angelo, TX	102/72/pc	43
● Sarasota, FL	91/78/t	25
Savannah, GA	98/76/t	71
Sheboygan, WI	78/62/s	25
● Shelby, NC	93/69/t	51
Sherman, TX	107/79/t	53
Shreveport, LA	105/78/s	53
Silver City, NM	93/65/t	43
● Sioux Falls, SD	85/60/t	29
Somerset, PA	71/60/r	50
● Somerville, NJ	79/62/r	50
South Bend, IN	80/59/s	25
● Spartanburg, SC	95/71/t	50
Springfield, IL	82/61/pc	25
Springfield, MO	91/70/pc	47
● St. Augustine, FL	92/77/t	75
● St. Cloud, MN	82/60/t	53
St. George, UT	104/80/pc	25
● Staunton, VA	84/64/t	39
● Stevens Point, WI	82/63/t	25
Stockton, CA	98/61/s	50
Stroudsburg, PA	75/58/r	50
● Stuart, FL	93/77/t	75
Sturgis, MI	80/60/pc	25
Tallahassee, FL	95/76/t	75
Thibodaux, LA	95/76/t	53
Topeka, KS	86/67/pc	41
Tuscaloosa, AL	99/75/t	57
Utica, NY	77/52/pc	33
Ventura, CA	75/63/s	54
Victorville, CA	106/70/pc	80
● Vineland, NJ	83/66/t	60
Visalia, CA	105/68/s	49
● Washington, DC	87/70/t	50
Watertown, SD	84/56/t	35
● Wausau, WI	80/62/t	25
Waynesboro, PA	74/62/t	39
● White Plains, NY	80/63/t	58
Wichita Falls, TX	108/76/t	75
● Wilmington, DE	80/67/t	53
Wilmington, NC	93/77/t	62
● Wisconsin Rapids, WI	82/63/t	25
Wooster, OH	77/55/t	75
Worcester, MA	79/61/pc	25
York, PA	74/62/t	50

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Thursday High/low/W	Friday High/low/W
● Acapulco	94/79/c	92/78/t
Addis Ababa	73/56/r	72/55/r
● Algiers	97/70/c	90/71/s
Amman	99/76/s	102/74/s
● Amsterdam	70/60/sh	69/56/c
Ankara	91/64/s	95/60/s
Asuncion	64/46/sh	74/49/pc
Athens	93/74/s	95/69/s
Auckland	59/49/pc	60/50/c
Baghdad	111/90/s	112/85/s
● Bangkok	89/79/r	89/80/sh
● Beijing	89/74/t	91/74/pc
Beirut	89/79/s	90/80/s
Belgrade	100/71/pc	101/73/pc
Berlin	76/56/t	77/58/pc
Bogota	69/49/sh	66/49/r
Brussels	71/57/pc	68/54/sh
Bucharest	97/66/s	98/66/s
Budapest	96/72/t	93/67/t
Buenos Aires	62/43/pc	54/40/pc
Cairo	94/74/pc	95/75/pc
Cape Town	66/48/pc	70/51/pc
● Caracas	91/78/r	90/77/r
Casablanca	85/66/s	84/66/s
● Colombo	87/78/r	87/79/r
● Copenhagen	69/57/sh	69/54/pc
Damascus	102/68/s	106/71/s
Dublin	62/46/c	63/45/sh
Geneva	75/61/sh	67/53/r
Guatemala City	83/63/pc	82/63/t
● Hanoi	96/80/r	92/80/r
Harare	78/50/pc	78/50/pc
Havana	89/73/pc	89/73/r
Helsinki	63/55/sh	65/58/sh
Hong Kong	88/82/r	89/82/r
● Jakarta	90/76/sh	92/76/sh
Jerusalem	89/72/s	91/73/s
Johannesburg	80/50/pc	76/51/c
Kabul	94/67/pc	92/65/pc
Khartoum	106/85/pc	102/82/pc
Kyiv	87/68/s	94/70/t
Kingston	94/82/pc	93/81/s
La Paz	58/26/s	58/28/s
Lagos	84/75/t	84/76/r
Lima	75/68/s	75/67/s
Lisbon	79/63/pc	78/61/s
London	72/53/sh	71/51/pc
Madrid	90/64/s	90/61/s
● Manila	92/80/r	92/80/t
Mexico City	77/58/sh	79/58/r
● Milan	79/67/t	76/63/t
Mombasa	86/70/pc	87/72/s
Montevideo	54/43/r	52/41/r
Montreal	77/58/s	78/60/s
● Moscow	73/58/r	73/52/pc
Nairobi	75/55/c	79/57/s
● New Delhi	92/82/r	94/81/t
Panama City	91/77/t	91/78/t
Paris	76/60/pc	73/56/sh
Port-au-Prince	101/73/t	101/73/s
Rio de Janeiro	79/72/pc	80/67/s
Riyadh	109/83/s	108/83/s
Rome	91/77/s	88/73/t
San Jose	86/70/r	85/71/t
● San Salvador	92/70/pc	92/69/sh
Santiago	69/41/pc	76/46/pc
Sao Paulo	86/66/pc	75/54/pc
Sarajevo	96/62/s	98/64/pc
Shanghai	91/81/sh	90/81/r
Singapore	91/81/t	93/80/pc
Stockholm	65/47/sh	63/47/sh
Sydney	72/59/pc	72/53/sh
● Taipei	91/78/r	91/79/r
Tegucigalpa	89/69/t	89/68/t
Tehran	105/77/pc	100/74/s
Tokyo	89/78/pc	89/77/t
Toronto	77/56/s	75/64/pc
Tunis	101/79/s	101/80/pc
Vancouver	76/59/pc	77/62/pc
Vienna	91/66/pc	80/61/t
Warsaw	76/63/sh	78/63/c
Yerevan	84/58/t	85/62/s
Zagreb	94/69/pc	89/64/t
● Zurich	77/61/t	65/52/t

● Denotes possible travel delays Thursday

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

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Trump picks Overton for FDA

Policy aide would lead embattled health agency

Yasmeen Abutaleb
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump named White House policy aide Heidi Overton to lead the Food and Drug Administration, turning to an "America First" ally to steady an agency shaken by staff losses, low morale and fights over vaccines, the abortion pill and drug approvals.

Trump's previous FDA commissioner, Marty Makary, resigned in May after 13 months on the job, following clashes with White House officials over flavored vapes, a stalled abortion pill safety study and public disagreements with drugmakers such as Replimune, Sarepta and Moderna over reviews of potentially lifesaving medicines and vaccines.

The choice of Overton, an ally of Makary, may deepen concerns among drugmakers and some FDA staff seeking stability after months of upheaval.

Chris Meekins, a former Trump health official who is now an analyst at Raymond James, said industry groups are likely to view Overton's lack of management experience negatively and warned her appointment could accelerate staff departures and reverse progress made since Makary's exit.

Overton, a doctor by training who serves as deputy director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, must be approved by the U.S. Senate. She previously worked at the America First Policy Institute, a conservative think tank.

"She is known to take on the HARDEST issues, and bring me solutions that work best for the Country," Trump wrote in a social media post on Aug. 19. "We need her leadership at the FDA now to ensure that the U.S. remains the WORLD LEADER for Scientific Discovery and CURES."

Heidi Overton, a doctor by training, serves as deputy director of the White House Domestic Policy Council.
JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS FILE

The FDA has faced numerous challenges in Trump's second term, including an exodus of experts and top talent and plummeting morale after Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. fired thousands of people across HHS.

The agency, which is responsible for regulating and approving all drugs, treatments and vaccines, has lost more than 3,000 staff over the past year, including division heads, and is under pressure to rebuild confidence among industry and public health groups.

Overton's nomination coincides with new efforts by Trump health officials to take action on a number of controversial issues, including autism and vaccines as well as the abortion pill.

Overton spoke at a White House event last week at which Trump announced a new executive order that calls for significantly cutting back the national childhood vaccination schedule and splitting the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine into three separate shots, which pharmaceutical companies said could take years.

"Heidi brings exceptional judgment, professionalism, discipline, and an unwavering commitment to the American people. I have seen her challenge assumptions, demand excellence, and turn bold ideas into meaningful results," Kennedy wrote on X.

Overton is likely to be viewed skeptically by pharmaceutical companies and a broader health care industry looking for stability at the embattled agency.

Meekins, a health official in Trump's first term, wrote in an analyst note on Aug. 19 that Overton has "seemingly no real experience running anything of consequence."

"Industry will view this pick as extremely troublesome and FDA career staff will continue to flee the agency in my view," Meekins wrote. "Any progress made since Makary's departure is likely to be quickly reversed if she is confirmed."

Kennedy has struggled to retain top health officials, creating turbulence at federal agencies responsible for nearly $2 trillion in government spending.

Erica Schwartz earlier in August was confirmed as director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The role had been vacant for over a year after Kennedy fired Susan Monarez within weeks of her confirmation due to a clash on vaccine policy.

Kyle Diamantas has served as acting FDA chief since May. Under his watch, the agency has reversed course on several drug approvals or reopened regulatory consideration for rare-disease therapies from Regenxbio, uniQure and Replimune. It also launched steps aimed at speeding up drug research by pairing sponsors with qualified research institutions to shorten the time from drug identification to first-in-human studies.

It remains unclear whether Overton will continue Diamantas' approach. Trump in recent months has pressed Kennedy for more action on vaccines and what Trump and Kennedy say is a possible link to autism, a view refuted by years of scientific research.

Overton's appearance and endorsement of Trump's executive order on vaccines last week unnerved some career staff at the FDA, according to a person familiar with the dynamics.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Major indexes rise as yields ease

Moderna's huge rally lifts other health care stocks

Sinead Carew and Avinash P
REUTERS

The main U.S. stock market indexes closed modestly higher on Aug. 19, as easing government bond yields boosted risk appetites while a dramatic rally in shares of vaccine-maker Moderna drove gains in the health care sector.

Investors barely reacted to minutes from the Federal Reserve's July meeting, which showed deepening concern about inflation with "several" policymakers ready to raise interest rates. "Many" said a rate hike would be needed if inflation does not decline to the U.S. central bank's 2% target.

But a day after the yield on the 30-year Treasury bond hit its highest level since 2007, the yield fell on Aug. 19 along with the 10-year Treasury yield. The moves came after the U.S. Treasury announced it would double the size of liquidity support buyback operations for longer-dated bonds.

"The risk-on trade is trying to hang on to the lifeline that Treasury Secretary [Scott] Bessent sent," said Carol Schleif, chief market strategist at BMO Private Wealth, noting that riskier assets including high-profile technology stocks had sold off in recent days as bond yields rose.

Concerns over ballooning government debt and rising inflation had pushed global bond yields to multi-decade highs on Aug. 18. Schleif said investors were relieved by the government support as higher rates "could potentially impact the AI trade" as technology companies have been issuing debt and equity and using their own cash to fund construction of data centers supporting AI.

However, equity indexes pared gains as the session wore on. Jim Baird, chief investment officer at Plante Moran Financial Advisors, said investors likely took some profits after the initial rally and he added that the morning's announcement "doesn't mean that the longer-term issue of higher rates is off the table."

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 119.65 points, or 0.22%, to 53,463.05; the S&P 500 gained 16.22 points, or 0.21%, to 7,707.98; and the Nasdaq Composite gained 41.38 points, or 0.16%, to 26,331.09.

Moderna's shares surged almost 177%, leading S&P 500 gainers in a record rally for the company after it announced that its personalized mRNA cancer therapy developed with Merck cut the risk of melanoma recurrence and spread in a late-stage trial. Merck shares jumped 12.6% and it was the biggest percentage gainer in the blue-chip Dow and the third-biggest in the S&P 500.

Moderna's blistering rally boosted health care peers such as Novavax, which finished up 10.8%, and U.S.-listed shares of BioNTech, which vaulted 22%.

The S&P 500 health care sector closed up 3.5%, marking its biggest one-day percentage gain since April 2025. The sector also hit a record high and provided the biggest boost to the S&P 500 from any of its 11 major industry sectors. The Nasdaq biotechnology index also jumped 6.4%.

The second-biggest S&P sector gainer was consumer discretionary, which added 2%.

The S&P 500 industrials index led percentage losses among the benchmark's industry indexes with a 0.9% decline. The S&P 500 information technology index was the next-biggest loser, down 0.7%, with pressure from chip stocks.

However, Marvell Technologies shares jumped 9.9% after it said it will help develop Google's in-demand custom chips and has offered the search giant the right to buy a potential $12.2 billion stake. Marvell was one of the few gainers in the volatile Philadelphia semiconductor index, which ended down 2%. Google parent Alphabet's shares finished up 0.2%.

On the earnings front, Target shares rose 4.3% after the retailer raised its annual sales forecast. Lowe's shares gained 2% even after it trimmed its annual sales growth forecast.

Estée Lauder shares jumped 16.3%, making it the S&P 500's second-biggest percentage gainer, after the cosmetics maker forecast annual profit above Wall Street estimates.

Oil prices

Brent crude futures settled at $91.62 a barrel, up 60 cents, or 0.7%, on Aug. 19. West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose 89 cents, or 1.1%, to settle at $85.83 a barrel.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Aug. 20. On this date in:

1619: On or about this day, "20 and odd" kidnapped Angolans arrived on a Dutch ship at the English colony of Jamestown, Virginia, to be forced into servitude. It was widely regarded as the beginning of African slavery in the United States. The voyage started with 350 captives; almost all died or were kidnapped a second time by pirates.

1858: Charles Darwin co-published the first outline of a theory of evolution. Published along with fellow scientist Alfred Russel Wallace, who had shared with Darwin his own independent work on the subject, it was met with little fanfare. Darwin developed the theory further and the following year published the landmark book "On the Origin of Species."

1866: The National Labor Union was founded in Baltimore and called on Congress to mandate an eight-hour workday, the first such demand. Although the group did not succeed – and folded only seven years later – it raised public awareness and birthed the American Federation of Labor.

1911: The first commercial telegram was sent around the world. The message left the New York Times building in New York City at 7 p.m. and was received 16 minutes later after traveling through 16 relays via the Azores, Gibraltar, India, Hawaii and San Francisco. It read: "This message sent around the world."

1940: Leon Trotsky was fatally attacked in his Mexico City home by a Spanish communist wielding an ice ax. He died the next day. The Russian Revolution leader had been living in exile for 11 years. The Soviet government said it was not responsible, though that was widely doubted.

1954: President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved a National Security Council paper throwing support behind Ngo Dinh Diem, who had been appointed prime minister of Vietnam, soon South Vietnam. The goal of the support was to restore U.S. "prestige" in Southeast Asia and "prevent further losses to Communism."

1960: The first live animals returned to Earth from a trip to space. The Soviet Sputnik 5 carried mutts Belka and Strelka, 40 mice and two rats. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev later sent one of Strelka's puppies to first lady Jackie Kennedy. Though a propaganda hero, Laika, the first dog in space, had been sent on a one-way mission.

1968: Approximately 200,000 Soviet-led troops and 5,000 tanks invaded Czechoslovakia and crushed the "Prague Spring," the communist country's brief period of liberalization. Protesters confronted tanks with flowers and took down street signs to confuse the soldiers, who killed more than 100 people.

1975: NASA launched the Viking 1 orbiter and lander to explore Mars. Almost one year later, it became the first spacecraft to successfully land on Mars. Viking 1 remained on Chryse Planitia for six years, taking photos and the first Martian soil samples.

1982: President Ronald Reagan ordered 800 Marines to Beirut to oversee the Palestinian and Syrian withdrawal during the Lebanese Civil War. Expected to be brief, the mission ended up lasting 17 months and resulted in the deaths of 262 U.S. service members.

1989: The bullet-ridden bodies of Jose and Mary Louise "Kitty" Menendez were found in their Beverly Hills mansion. After seven years and three trials, a jury found their sons Lyle and Erik, sole beneficiaries of the multi-million-dollar estate, guilty. In 2024, Los Angeles prosecutors announced they were reviewing new evidence of alleged sexual abuse brought forth by the brothers' attorneys.

USA TODAY Network

Rescue mission for aging NASA space observatory fails

Joey Roulette
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – A mission to rescue NASA's aging Swift Observatory in space was canceled on Aug. 19 after the spacecraft that was launched to tug the satellite to a higher orbit suffered irredeemable technical issues, according to the rescue craft's owner, Katalyst Space.

Katalyst's LINK craft was launched in early July to approach the Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory some 216 miles in space, grapple onto it and then tug it to a higher orbit of roughly 373 miles, extending its life by years.

But the LINK craft began spinning uncontrollably soon after reaching space.

Katalyst engineers spent weeks trying to regain control of the craft, uploading new positioning control software last week that slowed but did not stop its errant spinning.

"Following continued monitoring and assessment of the LINK spacecraft, Katalyst Space and NASA together have concluded that due to ongoing attitude control issues, the mission will not include the capture and boost of NASA's Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory," Katalyst and NASA said in a joint statement on Aug. 19.

The mission failure means NASA's prized $500 million Swift Observatory, which has been studying gamma-ray bursts and other cosmic phenomena since 2004, will likely fall into Earth's atmosphere naturally and burn up later this year.

The goal to boost the observatory's orbit and extend its life by years, the first U.S. mission of its kind, was an ambitious endeavor for Arizona-based start-up Katalyst, which said it built and tested the LINK rescue vehicle on an unprecedented nine-month production schedule under a $30 million NASA contract.

"We took on this high-risk, high-reward challenge and are proud of the milestones we reached along the way," Katalyst CEO Ghonhee Lee said in a statement.

He added that the company, founded in 2019 to build fleets of autonomous robotic spacecraft, has learned a "tremendous amount" during the mission and plans to implement those lessons on future flights.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Reports: Prince Harry, Meghan planning to move back to Britain

LOS ANGELES – Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, plan to move back to Britain this month, six years after they stepped down from their royal duties and relocated to the United States, media outlets reported on Aug. 19.

The duke and duchess of Sussex are moving with Prince Archie, 7, and Princess Lilibet, 5, from California to Britain for an extended period and the children will begin school there in September, People magazine and British newspaper The Telegraph reported.

There was no comment from Harry's spokesperson or from Buckingham Palace. However, a source close to the couple confirmed the reports' accuracy.

According to The Telegraph, the couple will not live in a royal residence. Their status will be unchanged, and they will remain nonworking royals as agreed with the late Queen Elizabeth II when they left in March 2020.

Harry married Meghan Markle in a dazzling ceremony at Windsor Castle in 2018. But it was not long before cracks in their relationship with the rest of the royal family began to emerge. Two years later, they announced they would step down from official duties and move to the United States.

Dulles airport gains approval for $19.9 billion overhaul plan

WASHINGTON – The board that oversees Washington Dulles International Airport voted on Aug. 19 to approve a $19.9 billion overhaul plan that includes $3.75 billion to build new underground tunnels to replace slow vehicles that transport passengers across the tarmac.

The $6.2 billion reconstruction of the main terminal at the primary international airport serving the Washington, DC, region is set to begin in late 2027, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority said.

The new tunnels and automated passenger transportation system and a new concourse are expected to be completed by 2034, as will renovations to the main terminal.

President Donald Trump announced the $22 billion plan in July, including a massive parking garage and transportation center that were not included in the $19.9 billion proposal approved on Aug. 19.

Kenya tourist helicopter crash kills 7, including Americans

NAIROBI, Kenya – Seven people, including five Americans and Ecuador's intelligence head, were killed on Aug. 19 when the tourist helicopter they were flying in crashed in Kenya's Samburu County.

The aircraft was flying to the Loisaba Conservancy, a wildlife reserve and safari destination in northern Kenya, when it crashed, according to a preliminary report from Archers Post police station seen by Reuters. All seven people – six passengers and one pilot – were killed, authorities said.

A State Department spokesperson said five Americans were among the dead, while Ecuador's presidential office confirmed intelligence head Michele Sensi-Contugi and his wife, Stephany Hollihan – who held U.S. citizenship – were also killed.

"The U.S. Embassy is in touch with local authorities and is providing consular assistance," the State Department said.

Luxury tour agency &Beyond, which offered the excursion the tourists were on, said in a statement that the cause of the crash was yet to be determined.

Thailand schools hold shooting drills after deadly school attack

BANGKOK – Thai schools conducted active shooter drills on Aug. 19 as authorities moved to strengthen security measures two weeks after a 14-year-old opened fire at a school and killed at least eight people.

At the Surasakmontree School in Bangkok, students took part in a "run, hide, fight" exercise, with a police officer dressed in black and acting as a mock attacker, armed with a handgun and an assault rifle firing blanks.

Students ran from the gunman and hid under tables and behind locked doors, while others used furniture to block entrances. In one scenario, students tackled and pinned down the attacker after he entered the classroom.

The drills follow a directive signed on Aug. 10 by Education Minister Prasert Jantararuangtong requiring schools to draw up security plans and rehearse emergency response procedures.

Reuters

Hind Rajab's grandmother shows a photo of the Palestinian girl in Gaza City on Aug. 19. DAWOUD ABU ALKAS/REUTERS

Israel opens Gaza probes

Admits its troops killed 5-year-old Hind Rajab

Rami Ayyub and Nidal al-Mughrabi
REUTERS

JERUSALEM – Israel's military acknowledged on Aug. 19 that its troops had opened fire on a car carrying 5-year-old Palestinian girl Hind Rajab and her family members in Gaza in 2024 and said it had opened a criminal investigation, though rights groups say such probes rarely lead to convictions.

Hind Rajab's killing was one of the most high-profile incidents involving civilian deaths during Israel's military assault in Gaza, launched following the 2023 Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel.

She died after being pinned down in a car for hours, begging Palestinian medics by mobile phone to send help, while her aunt, uncle and three cousins already lay dead.

An ambulance was dispatched, but soon after it arrived at the scene the dispatchers lost contact with both the girl and the responders. Twelve days later, the bodies of the girl, her relatives and two ambulance workers were recovered from the area.

The military previously denied its troops had been in the area near where she was killed. On Aug. 19, it said that following a monthslong probe by an internal fact-finding mechanism, it found that troops opened fire at her vehicle as it was approaching them.

It said a shell was later fired at a Palestine Red Crescent ambulance that had been dispatched to save her.

"Following review of the findings and due to alleged failures in the coordination of the movement of the Palestine Red Crescent ambulance, it has been decided to initiate a criminal investigation of the incident," the military said in a statement.

The military said the Fact-Finding and Assessment Mechanism would also open a criminal probe into the killing of 15 emergency and aid workers in March 2025.

In three other incidents, including the killings of seven aid workers with the World Central Kitchen charity in April 2024, the military said it found no basis upon which to open criminal investigations.

Investigations rarely lead to convictions, rights groups say

A film about Hind Rajab's death won an award at the Venice Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award.

Her grandmother, speaking to Reuters in a displaced persons camp in Gaza City, said that she and the girl's family "do not trust the judiciary of the state of Israel."

"We hope that justice will be from the entire world. We appeal to the international justice system as a whole," said her grandmother, Hind Rajab, after whom the girl was named.

Israeli rights groups say that criminal misconduct investigations into Israeli troops over the killing of Palestinians rarely lead to convictions.

Dan Owen, a researcher in the Yesh Din rights organization, said that over the last decade only a "tiny" proportion of investigations had led to indictments, while growing political pressure "further deters Israeli law enforcement authorities from holding those responsible accountable, even when clear evidence does exist."

Israel's military, which says its attacks target Hamas and Hezbollah militants, opens investigations into some of its attacks when they involve the deaths of civilians, including medical and aid workers or journalists.

More than 73,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks since the start of the Gaza war in 2023, with thousands more killed in its military operations in southern Lebanon. The dead include aid workers, doctors, journalists and others.

The Gaza ceasefire declared last October halted major fighting in Gaza but Israeli attacks have continued.

Israel has said that its ongoing strikes aim to thwart imminent attacks by Hamas and other Gaza militant groups.

More than 1,200 Palestinians and four Israeli soldiers have been killed since the truce, according to Gaza health authorities and the Israeli military.

UAE's financial embargo on Iran puts their rivalry back in spotlight

REUTERS

DUBAI – The United Arab Emirates' decision to suspend all financial and economic transactions with Iran until further notice, citing a military escalation by Tehran with a missile threat, has refocused the spotlight on fraught ties between the major Gulf Arab oil producer and Iran.

The UAE, a close U.S. ally and regional power, was the Gulf state most heavily hit by Tehran during the early stages of the Middle East war. However, the last reported attack on UAE soil was the May 4 strike on the Fujairah port, a key oil export hub.

The move by the UAE to sever commercial ties came after its defense ministry said that it had detected two ballistic missiles launched from Iran, an incident that marked the first time in months that residents received telephone alerts warning of possible threats.

In a statement, the ministry said the missiles targeted "maritime traffic" based on its assessments. Both missiles fell into the sea, it said.

The UAE also sent a phone alert on Aug. 18 to residents stating that the situation was safe and people should resume normal activities after the earlier warning.

Iran's foreign ministry rejected the statement by the UAE that its missiles targeted maritime traffic, describing it as "baseless."

Dubai, the UAE's main commercial hub, is one of Iran's most critical economic lifelines.
ABDEL HADI RAMAHI/REUTERS FILE

Dubai, the UAE's main commercial hub, is one of Tehran's most critical economic lifelines.

UAE official Afra Al Hameli, director of the Strategic Communications Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said the UAE was committed to dialogue and cooperation to advance peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Al Hameli said that in light of escalations that undermine regional and international peace and security, all trade, commercial exchanges and financial transactions with Iran have been halted.

Anwar Gargash, diplomatic adviser to the UAE president, said in a post on X that rumors about the "provision of financial facilities to Iran" are "false and part of desperate media campaigns."

The UAE was drawn into the wider war in the region which began in February with U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran. Tehran's attacks on UAE soil stopped in May, while they persisted in neighboring Kuwait and Bahrain. Attacks at sea on its vessels did not stop.

In August, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, or ADNOC, one of the world's largest energy producers, said it was being significantly impacted by what it described as unprovoked attacks on its people and assets, as it sought to continue meeting customer requirements in an "exceptionally challenging environment."

ADNOC said in a statement that several of its vessels had been attacked by missiles and drones while transiting the Strait of Hormuz since the start of the conflict.

The missile launch that the UAE blamed on Iran came as a 60-day window for U.S.-Iranian peace talks expired without a breakthrough, raising fears of a new escalation in the conflict that has disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz since February and rattled global markets.

Iran has not claimed responsibility for the attacks on ADNOC vessels. Iran's Revolutionary Guards have previously threatened action against vessels transiting the strait if they are linked to Tehran's adversaries or fail to comply with Iranian directives.

Debt

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priorities in the budget, and leave ourselves vulnerable to emergencies at home and turmoil abroad," MacGuineas said in a statement just after the Treasury data was released.

She noted that the $40 trillion figure was reached less than five months after debt reached $39 trillion, and has quadrupled in less than 20 years after taking until 1981 to reach $1 trillion for the first time.

"It is staggering how predictable the fiscal decline of a global power can become," MacGuineas added.

Global U.S. creditors may already be growing wary. Days after a $25 billion auction of 30-year Treasury bonds went off at the highest yield since 2021, yields on so-called long bonds on Aug. 18 hit their highest levels in nearly two decades as investors demanded greater compensation in the face of hefty U.S. government bond issuance.

On Aug. 19, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent took a bold step to push long bond yields back, announcing a doubling of buyback sizes for 10- to 30-year Treasuries to at least $4 billion per operation.

The term premium for 10-year Treasuries – a measure of how much of the security's overall yield is accounted for by the perceived risk of holding them over a decade – rose this week to its highest in more than a dozen years.

Against all that, demand for U.S. debt by foreign investors – who hold nearly one-third of all Treasuries – has been declining over the past year, leaving more bonds to fall to more price-sensitive buyers, which can exacerbate market volatility, John Canavan, lead financial market analyst in Oxford Economics' Macroeconomic and Investor Services group, wrote on Aug. 18.

Pandemic spending and more

The Treasury last week reported the fourth-highest monthly deficit in U.S. history – $432 billion for July – as tariff refunds turned customs receipts negative for the third month in a row and outlays for Social Security and Medicare benefits for seniors continued to grow.

The deficit for the first 10 months of fiscal year 2026 has already exceeded the total gap for all of fiscal 2025 with two months to go in the current fiscal year.

Trump has largely ignored the dwindling number of fiscal hawks in his Republican Party, championing heavy spending across his two terms. Public debt rose by $7.8 trillion during Trump's first term, with more than half of it accumulating during the pandemic response over his last nine months in office.

Since Trump took office a second time in January 2025, the U.S. debt load has increased by $3.8 trillion, for total growth of $11.6 trillion across his two terms so far.

Public debt increased by $8.4 trillion during Biden's term, also marked by heavy COVID-19 recovery spending, but driven as well by big-ticket outlays for infrastructure investment, clean energy subsidies and other priorities championed by his Democratic Party.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates that the policy choices of Trump and Biden have increased the federal debt trajectory beyond what would have accumulated under the existing spending statutes when each took office.

For instance, Trump's landmark second-term legislative package – the One Big Beautiful Bill Act – will add another $4.7 trillion in debt, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the nonpartisan bookkeeper for lawmakers.

Trump has branded his second presidency as one focused on cost-cutting, marked by early federal agency job cuts ordered by the nongovernmental Department of Government Efficiency. But much of his spending reductions has targeted so-called discretionary programs, the smallest portion of the federal budget.

Mandatory programs

The United States spends roughly $7 trillion annually, and 60% of it is earmarked for so-called mandatory programs, including payments for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and veterans' care, that generally grow to keep pace with living costs.

Another $1.1 trillion pays the interest on U.S. borrowing, the cost of which rises as the debt pile grows and as interest rates climb. The 2025 fiscal year budget marked the first time debt service costs exceeded Pentagon funding. In the first 10 months of the 2026 fiscal year, interest costs have eclipsed Medicare health care outlays to become the second-largest line item in the federal budget, behind the Social Security pension system.

The United States is spending more to fund the retirement and health care costs of the baby boom generation, straining the trust funds behind Social Security and Medicare even as payroll and income tax revenues fall short of covering federal costs.

Ukraine

Continued from Page 1NN

former boss in a runoff vote.

Bidochko said there was still no realistic procedure for organizing a vote, with millions of Ukrainians living as refugees overseas, displaced within the country, and serving in the military.

"Currently, it looks like an elegant way of occupying the opposition space without taking responsibility for the mechanics," she said of Fedorov.

Opinion on the streets and online was mixed on Aug. 19. The evening rally in support of Fedorov in central Kyiv was very sparsely attended, with a Reuters reporter seeing just over a dozen protesters.

"On the one hand, holding elections right now isn't the best idea. On the other hand, it's like a serious ultimatum to the president that could make him reconsider his appointments," said Ivan Hnatenko, one of the protesters who gathered in front of the parliament ahead of the vote on Khmara.

Dmytro Koziatynskyi, a veteran combat medic who had called for the original protests to reinstate Fedorov in July, took to social media to wish Khmara success and indicate that the protest is now over.

"I cannot imagine how to technically provide the possibility of a vote to thousands of service personnel currently serving at the front," he wrote on X.

People take shelter inside an underground parking lot amid Russian strikes in Kyiv early on Aug. 20.
VALENTYN OGIRENKO/REUTERS

Zelenskyy's 'drone'

Khmara, who briefly served as acting head of Ukraine's SBU security service, was not Zelenskyy's primary pick for defense minister and he was named as a placeholder only after the protests broke out.

Best known as the mastermind of Ukraine's deep strikes into Russia, Khmara steps into the role as Kyiv struggles to defend against mounting Russian ballistic-missile attacks and grinding advances on the front line.

Two of his predecessors had led the ministry for barely half a year each, fueling accusations of a lack of consistency at the country's most important ministry.

"Yevhenii Khmara is the president's drone: photogenic, heroic, obedient, and lacking its own governing system," said Mariana Bezuhla, an outspoken lawmaker with the presidential faction.

Protesters and opposition lawmakers have cited Khmara's strong reputation, but have lashed out at Zelenskyy for what they saw as a poorly explained decision to fire Fedorov.

New investigation

Ukraine's anti-corruption authorities said in a YouTube video that they had uncovered a group including a deputy head of the presidential office in a scheme that aimed to pay for bail in an existing energy corruption scandal.

The announcement built on a major investigation unveiled last November into an alleged $100 million kickback scheme at the state atomic energy agency that ensnared Zelenskyy's then-chief of staff, sparking widespread public anger.

The anti-graft agencies did not name the official, but Zelenskyy dismissed adviser Iryna Mudra shortly after the probe was announced. She later confirmed searches had taken place at her home, adding that she was fully cooperating with the investigation and that she would defend her good name.

ABC

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has "waged a retaliatory campaign" against ABC because the Republican president, among other grievances, disapproves of its news coverage and objects to on-air comments by its late-night host Jimmy Kimmel.

"Our job is to hold broadcasters accountable to the public interest standard," Carr told Reuters, citing how the government long has granted stations free use of the airwaves in exchange for providing programming in the public interest. "You made a deal with the American people. You know, live up to your end of the deal.

"The president has obviously every right to express his view on these matters," Carr said, adding that any decision will be "based on the facts and the law and the record."

Trump appointed Carr to the FCC in 2017 during his first term as president, and designated him as chair last year.

'Policy of intimidation'

"The sad fact is that this policy of intimidation has already worked, to a certain extent, by forcing media organizations and others to cower and keep their heads down, rather than act as they normally would in accordance with their First Amendment rights," said Gabriel Kahn, a journalism professor at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

The U.S. Constitution's First Amendment protects against government abridgment of free speech.

"The Administration has attacked ABC's speech – the stories its journalists report and the viewpoints its network programs air," the lawsuit stated.

The FCC, created by Congress in 1934, issues licenses to local broadcast television stations, typically requiring renewal after a period of eight years. The licenses for the eight Disney-owned stations – including some of its most profitable ones in cities including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston – were not due to expire until 2028 to 2031.

The FCC had not conducted early license reviews like the one involving these stations in half a century. The FCC has made 600 requests for information, yielding 13,000 pages of documents, and sought data on political donations made by staff.

The FCC's license review means the network cannot afford to "ignore the consequences of any decision that might anger the Administration or the FCC Chairman," the lawsuit stated.

For example, ABC decided not to broadcast Trump's July 16 speech in which he revived his long-running attacks on U.S. election security. Trump for years has made false claims of widespread voting fraud including in his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

ABC instead opted to carry the speech live on its streaming service – something it said it ordinarily would not have done – as it "considered the risk of resulting Administration retaliation" over its decision not to broadcast it live. NBC also did not broadcast Trump's speech live.

Afterward, Trump called for both networks to lose their licenses.

Guests on 'The View'

"The View," a show involving a regular panel of women discussing current events and entertainment along with guest interviewees, has not featured a political candidate since February, when James Talarico, a Democrat running for U.S. Senate in Texas, appeared, according to the lawsuit.

"Historically, decisions about which candidates or public figures to invite as guests were made based on newsworthiness, audience interest, and scheduling alone," the lawsuit stated.

The lawsuit said that in light of the FCC scrutiny, "ABC must now evaluate any invitation to a political candidate for its potential consequences."

Trump himself has appeared multiple times as a guest on "The View" in the past. Vice President JD Vance appeared as a guest in June, though he was not a candidate for office at the time.

Talarico's appearance triggered an FCC inquiry into whether it violated federal "equal time" rules that require broadcasters to provide the same opportunity to all qualified candidates. The FCC during the Biden administration in 2022 had exempted "The View" from the rule, deeming it a "bona fide" news program.

The FCC asked the Disney-owned station in Houston to produce all communications between its segment producers, the executive producer, its on-air hosts and the booking staff, about Talarico's appearance. The FCC also asked ABC to disclose the nature of any political donations made by its cohosts and individual employees, including an itemized list going back four years.

As a result, the network has become "more circumspect" about booking political candidates as guests on "The View" or even broadcasting video clips that could constitute appearances, the lawsuit said.

The Annenberg School's Kahn said the lawsuit illustrates how federal agencies under the Trump administration have been "weaponized to go after perceived enemies."

"The only course that companies like Disney have is to engage in lengthy and costly litigation in the courts. These are not good-faith actors," Kahn said.